



TOUSSAINT LAW FIRM, PC

When it really matters, Call us ...

(864) 888-1900

www.toussaintlawfirm.com

Personal Injury Law: 5 Tips for Speaking to Your Doctor After an Injury

By nature, insurance company employees are a skeptical bunch. These people will scour personal injury victims' medical records looking for evidence to deny claims. This is why you need the experience of personal injury lawyers to assist you and your rights.

When you do suffer a personal injury, naturally you will want to get better by going to the doctor. Effective communication between your doctor and you is essential to maximizing your chance of getting healthy following a personal injury. Another benefit of effective communication is that your injuries will be documented, so that when big insurance tries to deny your claim, your doctor (and his or her records) will support you.

Whether you have suffered personal injury following a car accident, an act of medical malpractice, or from other traumatic event, how you communicate with your doctor is an important factor in getting healthy and resolving your personal injury claim. The subject of physician-patient communication was recently the subject of a bestselling book written by Dr. Jerome Groopman entitled *How Doctors Think*. See book here. Dr. Groopman examines the human element of making diagnoses and treating patients. He emphasizes that how a doctor and patient interact is a crucial element in making the correct diagnosis and treatment plan. Dr. Groopman supports his thesis with citations to other literature about the importance of doctor-patient communication. As an AV rated personal injury lawyer who interacts with Rhode Island and Massachusetts accident victims, Dr. Groopman's book resonated with me. From my experience in personal injury law, here are five (5) tips for maximizing your communication with your doctor following a personal injury:

1. Prepare for your Appointment

Before your doctor's appointment, you should obtain information that will help your doctor. If you have been to the emergency room or treated with other doctors, try to bring these medical records with you. Doctors will want to see results of films studies (x-rays, CT scans, MRIs, and the like) and sometimes, the films themselves. If there was a police report following an accident, you could bring that to your doctor. At any rate, you should call your doctor's office beforehand to ask what specific information might be helpful. At a minimum, bring a list of the other doctors you have seen so that your doctor clearly understands what other treatment you have received. Keep a calendar of your doctor appointments and arrive early.

2. Explain Your Symptoms: Location, Frequency, Duration, Severity

Open and honest communication is the key to any relationship. For your doctor to help you, you must help your doctor by carefully explaining the accident or personal injury details that caused your injuries. How did the accident occur? Where were you hit? You also must provide your doctor with specific information about your pain and symptoms. Now is not the time to be shy, downplay your injuries, or act macho. Doctors cannot read your mind. When it comes to talking about your injuries, there are four (4) areas to cover in detail: (1) location of your injuries/pain; (2) frequency of your symptoms (how often are the symptoms present?); (3) duration of your symptoms (how long are they present for?); and, (4) severity of your symptoms (using a 0-10 pain scale, how much pain does your injury cause?). From a health perspective, a doctor cannot diagnosis and treat you effectively with limited information. From a legal perspective, insurance companies will discount your allegations unless they are found in your written medical records. Therefore, it is critical for you to be as open and detailed with information as possible.

3. Ask Questions

Most patients are not doctors. For you to get better, need to understand the medical process. This includes understanding such topics as your body, what is wrong with you, the treatment, the costs of treatment, treatment options, and how long treatment may take. You may have many other types of questions. If necessary, write down your questions ahead of time so you will not forget once you are in the doctor's office.

4. Do Not Be Afraid To Say "I Don't Understand"

You are unlikely to understand everything your doctor tells you at first. Do not feel dumb or intimidated. Rather, it is important for you to make sure you understand what your doctor is telling you. To do this, you need to be assertive. You can ask your doctor to re-phrase what he is saying or to use visual diagrams or the film studies to help you understand.

5. Understand Your Diagnosis, Treatment, and Prognosis

Once your doctor has examined you, he or she has hopefully made at least a preliminary conclusion about what is wrong with you (the diagnosis). Once a diagnosis is made, your doctor can discuss what steps can be taken for you to get better (treatment plan). Your doctor should also have an idea as to how likely it will be that you will make a full or partial recovery (the prognosis). By making sure you understand all of these topics following a personal injury, you will leave your doctor's office with a clear gameplan for your health.

Source: *"Personal Injury Law – 5 Tips When Speaking to Your Doctor After an Injury"* published on Battarro Law Firm, LLC.

Article link:

<http://www.bottarolaw.com/Community/Blog/tabid/1048/articleType/ArticleView/articleId/121/Personal-Injury-Law-5-Tips-For-Speaking-With-Your-Doctor-After-an-Injury.aspx>

Battarro Law Firm, LLC link: <http://www.bottarolaw.com/Home.aspx>