

Motor Vehicle Accidents



Pain and Injury



**ORTHOPEDIC
SPECIALISTS**

www.palmharborortho.com

Introduction

The effects of a motor vehicle accident (MVA) can range from frustrating to devastating. At the very least, vehicles need repairs, rental cars are necessary, and time may be lost from work. At worst, lives can be changed forever. This includes severe injury, disability, loss of one's job, or even possible loss of a loved one.

At Orthopedic Specialists, our Physicians are trained to evaluate and treat injuries following a motor vehicle accident. Our goal is to get your life back on track as quickly as possible through expert medical care.

Common Injuries Following A Motor Vehicle Accident

The following is a list of common motor vehicle accident - related problems seen at Orthopedic Specialists. Please refer to our other brochures for more information.

- **Neck and Back** - injuries usually involve whiplash to the upper or lower spine. These are the most common injuries seen after motor vehicle accidents. This is a common cause of headaches after an accident.
- **Shoulder Injuries** - occur from direct trauma or forces through the upper extremity from bracing against the steering wheel or dashboard. Common injuries include rotator cuff tears and labral tears.

- **Elbows** - are injured from bracing at impact or direct trauma. Besides fractures, medial or lateral tennis elbow is common. The ulnar nerve at the elbow ("funny bone") can be damaged, causing cubital tunnel syndrome with pain and numbness in the ring and small fingers.

- **Carpal Tunnel Syndrome** - and other nerve entrapments occur after blunt trauma, from bracing at impact or from air bag inflation.

- **Wrist Injuries** - result from steering wheel and dashboard impact and air bag deployment. Common diagnoses include ligament tears, fractures and tendonitis.

- **Sacroiliac Joint and Hip Injuries** - occur in the pelvic area from twisting injuries or direct trauma. These include joint sprains, bursitis and fractures.

- **Knee Injuries** - usually occur after blunt trauma from striking objects in the vehicle ("dashboard knee"). Common injuries include irritation of the knee lining (synovitis) or actual joint cartilage damage (arthritis from trauma). Other types of impact can result in ligament sprains or torn cartilage.

- **Fractures** - happen in all body areas. Common fractures include the sternum, the ribs and the collar bone (clavicle). Fractures in the chest can be very dangerous to the heart and lungs, especially in patients with prior medical conditions or the elderly.

In the upper extremities (arms), fractures occur from the steering wheel and dashboard, as well as the rapidly inflating

air bags. In addition, the arms and hands can strike other structures depending on the direction of impact.

In the lower extremities (legs), structures can strike the body (a side impact on a door) or the body can move forward into the dashboard. Some fractures occur indirectly from trying to apply the brakes (such as in a head-on collision).

QUICK TIP

Are you a member of AAA? If yes, you may have additional medical benefits. Contact your local AAA office and ask for "medical rider information". The number is listed on the back of your card.

Treatment and Recovery

The particular injuries seen after any accident are a combination of several factors. These include:

- the speed and weight of the two vehicles
- the use of seat belts and deployment of air bags
- the direction of the impact

Head on collisions have different injury patterns than rear end or side impact collisions. Vehicle rollover and being ejected from a vehicle are particularly dangerous.

Treatment after MVAs follows certain principles. Life threatening injuries are

treated at the scene and patients are transferred to a hospital or trauma center if needed. Fractures are stabilized with surgery, casts or braces as needed. The patients are stabilized, given physical therapy and sent home to continue care.

Patients after discharge and those not seen at a hospital start office care as soon as possible after the accident. After careful evaluation to document all areas injured, patients begin treatment and recovery. The mainstay of care include medications for pain, muscle spasm and inflammation. This is combined with physical therapy to control inflammation and then mobilize and strengthen injured body parts.

Patients are evaluated again after a few weeks to determine what injuries are improving, and which are not. For certain conditions, cortisone injections are given or the pills are changed as needed. In addition, diagnostic tests (e.g. MRIs) can be ordered to rule out serious soft tissue injuries that may require surgery.

Patients are followed for progress and areas still not recovering may require surgery. Additional diagnostic tests may be required as surgery is considered.

Surgery, if necessary, is then followed by physical therapy and continued medications. All injuries are observed and treated at the same time to speed recovery. **Our goal is to restore all injured areas as close as possible to preinjury levels.**

QUICK TIP

We specialize in MVA injuries. Have your friends and family call 938-1935 for MVAs and all orthopedic needs. We're here to help.

Safety Tips

1. Please, always wear your seat belt.
2. Please maintain your vehicle properly.
3. Observe all speed limits and remember, those posted are for roads under dry conditions during daylight hours.
4. Air bags can be lifesavers but can also be deadly. Sit back from your air bags and aim them towards your chest and away from your face. Never allow children, under the age of 12, to sit in the front seat by an air bag. If you are a small adult, consider having your air bag disengaged.
5. Avoid rush hour traffic if at all possible.
6. Drive defensively at all times. Leave a space between you and the car in front of you even when coming to a stop. Avoid driving in someone's blind spot, and be aware of potential crossing traffic.
7. **Limit the space between your headrest and the back of your head to help limit injury.**

QUICK TIP

Please refer to our other brochures for more information on your specific injuries.



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