Hand and Wrist Injuries After a Florida Bicycle Accident

Damage to a Cyclist's Hands Can Affect Work, Recovery, and Independence

Hand and wrist injuries are common in Florida bicycle accidents, since a cyclist's first instinct during a fall is to reach for the pavement. That reflex can leave the rider with a broken wrist, painful fingers, or a hand that cannot grip normally. Even when other injuries appear minor, damage to the hand or wrist can make working, driving, and caring for family members difficult.

The consequences extend beyond wearing a cast. An injured cyclist may need surgery, months of follow-up care, or help with tasks that previously required little thought. For someone who earns a living using tools, treating patients, preparing food, or typing, uncertainty about hand function can quickly become uncertainty about income.

A Palm Beach Gardens bicycle accident lawyer can investigate who caused the crash and help document its financial and personal consequences. A complete claim should account for the specific injury, the treatment required, and the ways impaired hand function changes daily life.

Key Findings

- **Bracing a Fall Can Cause Serious Injuries:** Cyclists who land on outstretched hands may break the wrist or damage its ligaments.
- **Some Fractures Hide on X-Rays:** A broken scaphoid bone may not appear on the first X-ray and can lead to serious complications if it is missed.
- **Recovery Can Take Months:** Surgery, hand therapy, and lasting stiffness are common after serious wrist fractures.
- **Careers Can Be Affected:** Lost grip strength or dexterity can change the kind of work a person is able to perform.

Why Cyclists Suffer So Many Hand and Wrist Injuries

Most hand and wrist injuries in bicycle crashes come from a fall on an outstretched hand. The cyclist's arm locks straight, and the wrist bends backward as it absorbs the weight of the body hitting the pavement. That force can break bones, tear ligaments, or do both at the same time.

Other injuries happen during the collision itself. A cyclist's hands may slam into the handlebars, strike the side of a vehicle, or get pinned beneath the bike. In the worst crashes, a tire can roll over a hand that is already on the ground, crushing the bones and soft tissue.

These injuries can happen even in crashes that look minor from the outside. A cyclist clipped at low speed in a parking lot can still fall hard enough to fracture a wrist. The visible scrapes on the palms often draw attention away from more serious damage underneath the skin.

Common Hand and Wrist Injuries in Florida Bicycle Crashes

Hand and wrist injuries range from small fractures that heal in a cast to complex injuries that require several surgeries.

Injury	How It Happens	Common Treatment	Long-Term Concerns
Distal radius fracture (broken wrist)	Landing on an outstretched hand	Cast, or surgery with plates and screws	Stiffness, reduced grip, and arthritis
Scaphoid fracture	Bending the wrist backward during a fall	Cast, or surgery with a screw	Bone that fails to heal, loss of blood supply, and arthritis
Wrist ligament tears	Twisting or bending forces during impact	Splinting or surgical repair	Wrist instability and chronic pain
Hand and finger fractures	Striking handlebars, pavement, or a vehicle	Splints, pins, or surgery	Reduced dexterity and a weak grip
Nerve injuries	Swelling, fractures, or direct impact	Therapy or surgery	Numbness, tingling, and weakness
Complex regional pain syndrome (CRPS)	Can develop after a fracture or surgery	Pain management and therapy	Long-lasting pain and limited use of the hand

The scaphoid, a small bone near the base of the thumb, deserves special attention. A scaphoid fracture may not appear on the first X-ray, so it can be mistaken for a sprain. If the break goes untreated, the bone may fail to heal or lose its blood supply, which can lead to arthritis and more surgery years later.

What Surgery and Recovery Can Look Like

Some wrist fractures heal in a cast over several weeks. Others are displaced, meaning the broken pieces have shifted out of place, and some require surgery to restore proper alignment and stability. Surgeons often repair these fractures with metal plates, screws, or pins that hold the bones in position while they heal.

Recovery does not always end with the first operation. Some patients need later surgery to remove painful hardware, repair a bone that did not heal, or treat arthritis in the damaged joint. Surgical hardware and the possibility of future procedures can significantly affect the value of an injury claim.

Rehabilitation is often the longest part of the process. Many patients work with certified hand therapists for months to rebuild motion, strength, and coordination. Even with dedicated therapy, some people never regain the full use of the hand or wrist that they had before the crash.

How Lost Grip Strength Affects Daily Life

Doctors and therapists often measure grip and pinch strength with specialized tools and compare the injured hand to the uninjured one. These measurements create a clear record of how much function a cyclist has lost. Repeated testing over time can also show whether that loss is likely to be permanent.

Weak grip strength affects far more than work. Simple tasks like opening a jar, buttoning a shirt, carrying groceries, or lifting a child can become painful or impossible. Many cyclists also find that they can no longer ride, since gripping the handlebars and braking safely depend on strong, steady hands.

A doctor may assign a permanent impairment rating once recovery has leveled off. That rating, along with medical testimony, can help show that an injury is lasting rather than temporary. Permanent injuries can make a substantial difference in the compensation available under Florida law.

When a Hand Injury Threatens a Career

For many people, a hand or wrist injury does more than cause pain. Mechanics, construction workers, nurses, dental hygienists, hairstylists, musicians, and office workers who type all day depend on strong, precise hands to earn a living. A permanent loss of grip or dexterity can force a career change or end a career entirely.

Florida injury claims can include lost income for the time spent recovering. They can also include lost earning capacity, which means the reduced ability to earn money in the future because of a lasting injury. For a skilled worker in mid-career, lost earning capacity can be one of the largest parts of a claim.

Proving these losses usually requires more than pay stubs. Medical opinions, job descriptions, and analysis from vocational experts, who study what kinds of work an injured person can still perform, can show exactly how the injury changed someone's future. Mr. Shomo works with medical experts and other professionals to build that detailed picture.

How Florida Law Affects a Cyclist's Injury Claim

Florida's personal injury protection (PIP) coverage may apply to cyclists injured in collisions with motor vehicles, depending on the circumstances and available coverage. Under Florida Statutes § 627.736, PIP generally pays 80% of covered medical expenses and 60% of lost income, subject to statutory requirements and limits. Benefits may reach $10,000 for qualifying injuries, but lower limits can apply.

In bicycle accident claims involving Florida's motor vehicle no-fault law, recovering compensation for pain and suffering may require meeting the injury threshold under Florida Statutes § 627.737. Qualifying injuries include certain permanent injuries, significant and permanent scarring or disfigurement, and significant and permanent loss of an important bodily function.

Timing and fault also matter. Under Florida Statutes § 768.81, an injured person found more than 50% at fault cannot recover compensation, and any recovery is reduced by that person's own share of fault. Florida also generally requires negligence lawsuits to be filed within two years under Florida Statutes § 95.11, so waiting can put a claim at risk.

Steps to Protect Your Health and Your Claim

The days and weeks after a bicycle crash can shape both recovery and the strength of an injury claim. A few careful steps can help protect a cyclist's health and preserve the evidence needed to prove the full extent of a hand or wrist injury:

- **Get a Follow-Up Exam:** Return to a doctor if wrist pain continues after a normal X-ray, since some fractures appear only on later imaging.
- **See a Hand Specialist:** Persistent wrist pain after a crash may require prompt evaluation by a hand specialist, even if initial X-rays are normal. Ask whether additional imaging, such as an MRI or CT scan, is appropriate.

- **Follow the Therapy Plan:** Attend every hand therapy session, since gaps in treatment give insurance companies an opening to question the injury.
- **Keep Work and Pay Records:** Save documentation of missed shifts, modified duties, and lost job opportunities.
- **Refer Insurance Company Calls to a Lawyer:** Do not give a recorded statement to the driver's insurance company, which is a business that works to pay as little as possible.

Insurance adjusters often look for ways to minimize hand and wrist injuries, especially when the first X-ray looked normal. Having a lawyer involved early helps ensure that every medical record, test result, and lost paycheck is documented before the insurance company places a value on the claim.

Protecting a Cyclist's Hands, Livelihood, and Future

A serious hand or wrist injury can affect every part of a cyclist's life, from daily tasks to long-term career plans. The Law Offices of Casey D. Shomo, P.A., offers big firm resources with small firm attention, personally overseeing every case and working with nurse paralegals and medical experts to document the full impact of an injury.

Mr. Shomo has recovered more than $85 million for his clients, including an $8.2 million result in a car and tractor-trailer accident case and a $10.9 million result in a car accident and product liability case. Schedule a free consultation to learn more about your legal rights and options after a Florida bicycle accident.