

What Happens If Pre-Existing Injuries Are Aggravated in a Crash?

Understand your legal options when old injuries flare up

Getting into [a car accident](#) is stressful enough on its own. But if you already had a medical condition or previous injury before the crash, things can quickly become more complicated. Many accident victims worry that insurance companies won't take them seriously or that they'll be blamed for injuries they didn't "technically" get from the accident.

Those concerns are understandable and common. People with prior injuries often question whether they can seek compensation at all or if their case will be dismissed. A car accident can aggravate an old injury, turn a manageable condition into a painful one, or undo years of recovery in an instant.

Understanding how pre-existing injuries are treated after a crash is an important first step. From how Florida law looks at aggravated injuries to what insurance companies try to argue, knowing where you stand can help you protect your health, your rights, and your future.

What is a pre-existing injury?

A pre-existing injury is any medical condition, injury, or physical limitation that existed before the car accident occurred. This doesn't mean the condition was severe or disabling. Many people live normal lives with prior injuries or chronic conditions. Common examples of pre-existing injuries include:

- Back or neck injuries
- Herniated or bulging discs
- Arthritis or degenerative joint conditions
- Old fractures or orthopedic injuries
- Previous surgeries
- Chronic pain conditions
- Shoulder or knee injuries
- Soft tissue injuries

Even if your condition was stable or asymptomatic before the crash, a sudden impact can aggravate or reactivate it.

Signs that a pre-existing injury was worsened by a crash

After a car accident, it's common to focus on obvious injuries first. But when you have a pre-existing condition, it's not always clear right away that it has been aggravated. In some cases, adrenaline masks pain at first, or symptoms gradually worsen as inflammation sets in over time. This can leave people questioning whether what they're feeling is truly accident-related or just a return of old issues.

Paying attention to changes in how your body feels and functions is important. Even subtle differences can indicate that an existing injury was aggravated by the crash. Common signs include:

- Pain that is more intense or frequent than before
- New radiating pain, numbness, or tingling
- Increased swelling or inflammation
- Difficulty performing daily activities
- Needing stronger pain medication or new treatments
- Being advised by a doctor that surgery is now necessary

If your condition was manageable before the accident but worse afterward, that change matters, both medically and legally.

Injuries commonly aggravated after a car accident

Certain types of injuries are especially prone to worsening after a crash. These include:

- **Neck and back injuries:** Whiplash, herniated discs, and spinal degeneration are often aggravated by the sudden movement involved in a collision. Even minor crashes can intensify existing spinal issues.
- **Arthritis and degenerative conditions:** Many people have arthritis or degenerative disc disease without constant pain. A crash can trigger flare-ups, accelerate degeneration, or cause long-term discomfort.
- **Shoulder and knee injuries:** Prior tears, sprains, or joint instability can worsen due to the force of impact, seatbelt strain, or bracing during the collision.
- **Soft tissue injuries:** Muscle strains and ligament damage from prior injuries can be reactivated or made more severe, leading to chronic pain or limited range of motion.

How Florida law handles pre-existing injuries in car accident claims

Florida follows the eggshell plaintiff rule, which means a negligent driver is responsible for the harm they cause, even if the injured person had a pre-existing condition. A driver cannot avoid liability simply because the victim was more vulnerable to injury.

If a car accident aggravates, worsens, or reactivates an existing injury, the at-fault driver may be held responsible for that additional harm. The focus is on how the accident changed the person's condition, not what their health looked like before the crash. Despite this, insurance companies often challenge these claims and attempt to shift blame back onto the injured person.

Challenges with insurance companies

Insurance companies often look for reasons to minimize or deny claims involving pre-existing injuries. A common tactic is arguing that your pain was not caused by the accident, but rather by your prior condition.

You may hear statements like:

- “That injury existed before the crash.”
- “Your symptoms are unrelated to the accident.”
- “The accident didn’t make your condition worse.”

This is where many accident victims feel discouraged. However, having a pre-existing injury does **not** automatically disqualify you from compensation. What matters is whether the accident aggravated or worsened your condition. Strong medical documentation, treatment records, and legal help can make a difference in these types of cases.

Why medical documentation is critical

Medical records play a large role in injury cases, especially when a pre-existing condition is involved. Seeking medical treatment as soon as possible after a car accident helps create a clear timeline that connects the crash to the worsening of your condition. The earlier your symptoms are documented, the harder it is for insurers to claim they were unrelated to the accident. Doctors and medical providers will carefully evaluate how the accident affected you. They can:

- Compare your pre-accident and post-accident condition
- Document new or worsening symptoms, limitations, or pain levels
- Note changes in mobility or daily function
- Provide professional opinions on whether the accident aggravated an existing injury

Consistent follow-up care is just as important. Gaps in treatment or delays in seeing a doctor give insurance companies more room to argue that your pain is the result of natural progression, aging, or a prior condition, rather than trauma caused by the crash. Clear, well-documented medical records help protect your claim and support your right to compensation.

After a car accident injury, you deserve compensation

If you or a loved one suffered an aggravated pre-existing injury in a car accident, you don’t have to face the insurance company alone. [The Law Offices of Casey D. Shomo, P.A.](#), located in Palm Beach Gardens, Florida, understands how overwhelming these situations can be, especially when insurers question your injuries or try to minimize what you’re going through.

As a small firm, we take a more personal approach to every case. Mr. Shomo has over 30 years of experience. He takes the time to listen, understand your medical history, and learn how the accident has truly affected your daily life. This one-on-one attention allows him to advocate and build a case that reflects your real experience, not just paperwork.

We know that aggravated injury claims can feel frustrating and unfair. Our goal is to relieve some of that stress by handling communication with insurance companies, pushing back against blame-shifting tactics, and working to secure compensation that accounts for the full impact of your injuries, past, present, and future.

[Contact our law firm today](#) to get started. We handle car accident cases on a [contingency fee basis](#), so you don't owe us anything unless we win your case.