

# NEXT STEPS AFTER SCHEDULING YOUR INITIAL APPOINTMENT

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**N**ow that you've set your initial appointment, please take the following steps to get ready for your meeting with your attorney:

## WRITTEN SUMMARY

Prepare a brief written summary of the accident that led to your injuries. Include relevant information such as the date of the accident, the approximate time of day, the weather and road conditions at the time, the street/intersection where the accident occurred, and the names and contact information for any witnesses. Note whether police and/or emergency medical personnel responded to the scene, and if so, whether you have already obtained the official police report or ACR ambulance call report (if you don't already have these documents, your attorney will want to request them as soon as possible because they may end up being crucial to your case). If you've already given a recorded or written statement to an insurance adjuster, mention this in your written summary and specify what statements you made. Once you've completed your written summary, print it out and remember to submit it to your attorney when you meet with him/her.

## INJURY PHOTOS

Take photos of your injuries if you haven't done so already. Continue to take photos periodically at regular intervals (for example once every three weeks, once per month, etc.) to document your progress with recovery. Note the date of all photographs you take. You can either bring the photos to your attorney when you visit the office or submit them to the office electronically via email.

## MEDICAL RECORDS

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Gather together any medical records in your possession for the injuries at issue. Also gather medical records for any prior or subsequent injuries to the same body parts. If you suffer from an unrelated medical condition that your attorney should know about, gather those medical records as well. Keep in mind that “medical records” includes all doctors’ notes, surgery reports, physical therapy logs, prescriptions, test results, and anything else you may have. Place all the medical records together in a folder in chronological order and bring the folder with you when you meet with your attorney. Be sure to retain copies of everything for your own records.

**Note**—in the majority of cases, your attorney will obtain your medical records directly from your medical providers by submitting written requests along with completed authorization forms bearing your signature. However, this process can take several weeks to complete depending on the speed with which the medical provider processes such requests. You can help expedite this process by turning over to your attorney whatever medical records you already have in your possession.

You may also wish to consider preparing a brief medical chronology for your attorney. This is a short outline that lists the injuries you’ve sustained, when you sustained them, and the medical providers that treated you. A medical chronology is typically only needed for cases involving numerous significant injuries over an extended period of time involving treatment from several medical providers.

## MEDICAL TREATMENT

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Continue seeking medical treatment and attending doctor’s appointments as scheduled. Try not to miss any appointments or postpone treatment unless absolutely necessary because this can end up having a negative impact on the strength of your case in the long run. If you find yourself in a situation where you may need to cancel or postpone scheduled medical treatment, contact your attorney’s office and let them know. A member of the office staff will advise you as to the appropriate course of action.

## INSURANCE

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Your attorney will need to obtain information regarding your insurance coverage. Make a copy of all insurance cards and bring them with you to your appointment. If possible, please also bring with you copies of the insurance policies themselves.

## EMPLOYMENT/SCHOOL

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Depending on the specific circumstances of your case, your attorney may need to obtain your employment and/or school records for the relevant time periods in question. This will be handled when you come to your attorney’s office by having you fill out and sign an authorization for the release of such records. In anticipation of this, please be sure to write down the full name, mailing address, and contact information for your employer and/or educational institution, and bring this information with you on the date of your meeting. If this information ends up being incomplete or

inaccurate, the law office may have to make additional follow-up requests with the employer or institution, which can end up delaying the receipt of records.

## SOCIAL MEDIA

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Avoid posting photos or videos to social media during the pendency of your personal injury case. There is a high probability that the Defendant's insurance company will be monitoring your activity on websites like Facebook and Twitter to check whether that activity is consistent with that of an injured person. Photos or videos of you engaging in recreational or other physical activity (i.e. pictures of you traveling on vacation, working out at the gym, playing softball, etc.) will be damaging to your case if opposing counsel discovers them.

## SILENCE

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Avoid speaking to anyone else about your case other than your attorney. If the Defendant's insurance company tries to get in contact with you at any point from here onward, do not respond. Contact your attorney's office and report this right away. Keep in mind that your attorney has already sent written notification to all parties involved in the case confirming that you have retained legal representation and must not be contacted directly for any reason. Therefore, you are under no obligation to interact with the insurance company at all- not even for the purpose of directing them to your attorney.

## PROPERTY DAMAGE PHOTOS

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Do you plan to submit a claim for property damage in addition to your claims for bodily injuries? If so, then be sure to take photographs of the property that was damaged in the accident. It's important to do this before having the property repaired, serviced, or otherwise relinquishing control over it. Keep copies of all receipts and invoices from repair work.

## RECORD OF LOST WAGES

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Do you expect to have a claim for lost wages? If so, secure all relevant information supporting your claim such as salary information, paychecks or paystubs, and tax documentation. Prepare a rough calculation of the total amount of wages lost as a result of your time out from work.

While it's certainly understandable that you may need to return to work in order to support yourself financially, keep in mind that this can negatively impact a potential lost wages claim. If you elect to return to work but later decide that you need to take additional time off due to your injuries, it may be difficult to make a successful claim for lost wages for that latter period of absence. If you're unsure how to proceed regarding the issue of returning to work, contact your attorney for guidance.

## PHOTO ID

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Make a copy of your government photo identification and bring it with you to your appointment. Your attorney will need this for your office file. Whatever form of identification you use (state driver's license, passport, etc.), be sure that the ID is current and not expired.

## PAPERWORK

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If you were asked to complete paperwork and bring it with you to your appointment, be sure to do so.

## QUESTIONS

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If you have any other questions about your case from now until the time of your meeting, you may contact your attorney's office.