

Nevada

Workers' Compensation Law Blog

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Sexual Problems May Be Related to Spinal Cord Injury

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Many injured workers with severe spinal cord injuries are reluctant to mention to their treating physician that they have had sexual dysfunction since their work accident in Nevada. Males in particular are embarrassed to bring up this topic with their doctors. Unless the doctor initiates the discussion and directly asks about any sexual problems, the problem isn't noted in the dictated reporting, and isn't treated. And if the problem is permanent, the injured worker isn't properly evaluated for impairment.

It is very important that if you have had a serious spinal injury that you tell your treating physician about any **loss of control of the bladder and/or bowels (involuntarily urinating or soiling yourself), any loss of sensation to your genitals and surrounding area, and any inability to engage in usual sexual activity.**

Orthopedic surgeons, neurosurgeons, and physiatrists are busy doctors, and your appointment may already seem rushed without you bringing up an embarrassing problem. However, you should not delay in asking the doctor about these symptoms. If there is a nurse case manager that is present at doctors' visits, you might want to ask the nurse to allow you to speak to the doctor privately about a symptom that is bothering you. You have the right to see the doctor alone. Unless you speak up and tell your doctor who is treating your spinal injury about these problems, nothing will be done to investigate and find the right treatment.

Once you do discuss the problem, your spine doctor may want to refer you to a urologist for testing, or to your own primary care doctor to rule out other possible non-industrial causes for your complaints. Adjusters will usually pay for consultations to determine the cause of the problem if your spine doctor makes the request for a consultation. If it's found that the spinal cord injury isn't the cause, at least you will know what you need to do to treat the problem.

If there is a direct causal connection between your work injury and loss of bladder or bowel control, or sexual dysfunction, your permanent partial disability (PPD) award could be significantly increased when you are rated under the AMA Guides to Evaluation of Impairment, Fifth edition. The injured worker must be vigilant about having these impairments included in the rating.