

TIPS FOR PHOTOGRAPHING PERSONAL INJURIES

There is a cliché that a picture is worth a thousand words. When it comes to describing injuries, sometimes it means much more than that. In personal injury cases, and in particular, dog bite cases, car accident cases, motorcycle crashes, and other cases where there are traumatic injuries, photos are powerful evidence of the nature of the injuries. Visual images of injuries will show any injury in a far more graphic and compelling way than descriptive testimony of wounds offered long after the wounds have healed to the extent that they are going to. In fact, with some insurance companies, photos create more settlement value than written descriptions of the injuries from your doctors.

When there is visual evidence of the injuries, such as bruising, lacerations, road rash, stitches, staples, or protruding surgical pins, we strongly recommend to all clients that they get photographic documentation of the injuries. As experienced Chicago personal injury lawyers, we frequently send clients to have photos taken by a professional photographer who frequently takes pictures of injuries. A professional photographer will have a sophisticated understanding of lighting and angles so as to properly bring out the full extent of the injuries. On the flip side, we do not recommend that you rely upon an adjuster or investigator from the insurance company to take pictures. They also understand lighting and angles, and you can be sure that the photos will not adequately show the severity of your injuries.

However, if you decide to take photos on your own, here are some tips that we have which will help properly photograph your injuries:

1. Use a digital camera capable of taking high quality photos. These would be large files, and you should use the highest setting for the camera.
2. The digital date should be correctly set, both to help you remember when the photos were taken and to dispel any controversy regarding the photos.
3. Photos should be taken indoors if possible in a very well-lit room. If necessary bring in extra lights.
4. You should have someone else take the pictures. “Self-portraits” are simply inadequate.
5. You should be dressed cleanly and conservatively, with a minimum of jewelry on. Piercings any place other than your ears should be removed, and ear rings on men should be removed. Take your watch off. Do not wear clothing with team logos, political slogans, or sayings that may be controversial. If you have lower extremity injuries, you should wear shorts.
6. To the extent possible, tattoos should be covered over with clothing. Where this is not possible, e.g., the injury passes right over or very close to a tattoo, then the tattoo should be exposed, but if there are additional tattoos, these should remain covered.
7. The initial picture should be taken against a fairly clean background such as a wall. Do not take pictures against mirrors or windows because of the effect that a flash may have against the glass.

8. You should keep as many belongings out of the photos of your injuries as possible such as TV sets, framed photos, and other clutter. The focus of the photos should be you, not the things around you.
9. An initial “establishing photo” should be taken which shows you from head to toe. You should be as close to expressionless as possible – not smiling, not displaying a pained look, etc.
10. A second photo should be taken moving in for a closer view of the injured part, and then successive photos should be taken from various angles up closer to the injury so as to size its size and depth. At no time should the photos be taken from such a near vantage point that the picture becomes out of focus.
11. The area which is being photographed should not be in the exact center of the photo if a flash is being used. The flash has a tendency to create a reflection which may wash out the image. The flash should be targeted just outside the area being targeted by the picture.
12. Be modest, covering up as much of your body as possible while still accomplishing the goal of documenting your condition.

These are some basic guidelines which should help you photograph the injuries you suffered in your accident. However, as experienced Chicago personal injury lawyers, we strongly recommend getting the assistance of a professional for this.