

Four Common Work-Related Minor Injuries that Often Go Unnoticed and Can Lead to Long-Term Health Issues

Susanne McGraw describes common work related injuries.



Susanne McGraw, Head of Personal Injury at Watermans

In the workplace, accidents can be quite frequent, and some can result in serious and minor injuries. It has been estimated that 270 million workplace injuries occur across the world each year.

When it comes to Britain, work-related injuries and health issues tend to be on the daily agenda too. Every year, about 1.7 million employees will suffer from some sort of occupational ill health, and 0.4 million will end up picking up non-fatal injuries.

In the event of an accident that has happened due to the employer's negligence and has had a negative impact on the person's life, workers can file a work accident claim to receive well-deserved compensation.

That said, it is common for less resounding incidents to go unnoticed. But the truth is, in the long run, they can gradually escalate into a bigger problem, causing extended pain and suffering.

Here, we take a look at habitual, work-related minor injuries and health problems that are often overlooked when, in reality, they shouldn't be.

1. Slips, trips and fall-induced injuries

Slips and trips are the most recurring cause of injury in the workplace. In fact, they are responsible for more than one-third of all significant injuries and can often lead to further accidents, such as falls from height and into machinery.

Slips and trips are so common because they can easily happen in any environment, from 'standard' offices to construction sites. Tendentially, they occur when floors are wet or contaminated due to poor maintenance and housekeeping. As they are a very frequent form of accident,

it is easy to brush off the episode if there is no noticeable, immediate consequence.

However, slips, trips, and falls can originate an array of severe injuries and health issues. For instance, they may result in head and brain injuries, cuts, lacerations, soft tissue injuries to the back, and fractures. Some of these injuries may show very feeble symptoms at first. But if ignored and left untreated, they can quickly worsen and have a negative impact on the lives of those affected.

2. Whiplash injury

The nature of some jobs may require workers to hit the road on a daily basis. From couriers and florists to dog groomers and street food restaurateurs,

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there are many occupations where driving is an inescapable part of the job description.

When out and about, especially during rush hours, mishaps can take place at every turn. Even slamming the breaks to avoid colliding with another vehicle or a pedestrian can be harmful. You are likely to suffer an abrupt movement of the head and neck, which may result in whiplash injury. The effects of whiplash can take up to 24 hours to manifest and could be confused for tiredness or a normal headache. However, in some instances, whiplash can become a serious, long-standing condition that causes chronic pain, concentration and memory problems, and inability to sleep soundly.

Susanne McGraw, Head of Personal Injury at Watermans, said: "As part of a team of personal injury lawyers, I support many people who have suffered a whiplash injury when at the wheel of their vehicle. Most of them will recover within days, whereas others have to deal with its effects for weeks or even months.

"My recommendation is to seek medical assistance as soon as possible. This will give you the chance to get the treatment you need and alleviate feelings of discomfort in a timely manner."

3. Noise-Induced Hearing Loss (NIHL)

Work-related hearing problems affect about 14,000 employees in the UK every year. This is usually the result of spending prolonged hours in a loud environment, especially when sounds surpass 85 decibels. For instance, workers who handle electric hand tools or other sound-emitting equipment have a good chance of suffering from NIHL.

The problem with NIHL is that it tends to happen and escalate gradually. This means it is difficult to catch before the damage has ultimately been made. It is likely that the sufferer will not even realise that it's occurring until it is too late. It is important to look out for subtle symptoms such as sensations of 'fullness' in the ears and an intermittent or continuous buzzing. If you notice you are struggling to hear people talking a few feet away, you should start asking yourself why, especially if you work in a noisy environment.

To prevent NIHL, make sure you always wear noise-reducing earmuffs. Where possible, it is wise to collaborate with your employer to find methods to both measure and control noise levels.

4. Repetitive strain injury

Repetitive strain injury (RSI) is a common injury that happens when muscles, tendons, and nerves carry out the same action. Manual occupations often require you to perform specific motions repeatedly. This, in turn, can favour physical damage over an extended period of time.

Because the damage is gradual, RSI can go unnoticed for a long time, and it usually affects the hands, wrists, elbows, neck, and shoulders. If not diagnosed early, RSI can deteriorate and become chronic, making the recovery process very challenging. Some of its most prominent causes are constant movements such as typing, poor ergonomic conditions, and not taking regular breaks.

One of the problems with RSI is that its symptoms are easily neglected. At the start, it will only manifest itself through tingling and sensory disturbances in the forearm and hand, which quickly subside as you rest your limbs for a short while. This can wrongfully tempt people to postpone seeking medical advice.

One of the best ways to prevent RSI issues is to assume a straight sitting posture with relaxed arms and shoulders. Not only that, but it's also to vary your movements as much as possible and avoid repetitive motions.

From whiplash and repetitive strain to noise and slip-induced injuries, there are many issues that can emerge as a result of work accidents and habitual job duties. If you start experiencing mild symptoms that you cannot explain, don't put up with it – make sure to see your doctor. A medical appointment can nip the problem in the bud, sparing you from chronic pain and suffering in the long term.

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