

Nevada Workers' Compensation Law Blog

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Knee and Shoulder Injuries at Work

Work-related traumatic injuries to knees and shoulders are common. These are two of the most complex joints in the body. If an injured worker is not getting better with physical therapy, reduced activity, and drugs to reduce inflammation, the initial treating physician may then order a MRI to better diagnose injury to the ligaments, tendons, and cartilage. The clinic physician may also refer the patient to an orthopedic physician. An injured worker may ask for a specific orthopedic physician on the insurer's provider list.

Nevada workers in occupations that require extensive kneeling, heavy lifting, squatting and climbing are at risk of meniscal tears to the knees. (The menisci are pads of cartilage that act as cushions between the femur and tibia bones, and they help distribute body weight and minimize friction within the knee joint.) Most meniscal repairs can be done at an out-patient surgical center with an instrument called an arthroscope that creates only small scars. Recovery time is usually quick, and if a partial meniscectomy is done, a 1% whole person permanent partial disability award is given. **If you have had a knee surgery on your accepted workers compensation claim and the insurer tries to close your claim without a rating evaluation, you should consult with an attorney right away.**

Painful and disabling shoulder injuries more typically result from direct trauma at work rather than overuse. Tendinitis, impingement and rotator cuff tears are usually treated conservatively first with physical therapy and medication. Again, the injured worker does have a right to request a transfer of care to an orthopedic doctor of his choice, so long as that doctor is on the insurer's provider list. If you are uncomfortable with a particular surgeon and surgery is necessary, ask for a second opinion and transfer of care. Most shoulder injuries that require surgical treatment result in some permanent loss of range of motion in the joint, and that will be the basis for an impairment award at the end of the claim. If the shoulder surgery includes removal of a significant part of the distal clavicle bone, then the permanent partial disability award should also include an award for that procedure. **Many attorneys will review a permanent partial disability award on a shoulder claim for free to determine whether the award includes everything it should.**

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