

Can I Get Compensated for Psychological Trauma After a Car Accident?

Our Pittsburgh car accident lawyers can help you take back control

After a car accident, not all injuries are visible. Sure, the cuts and bruises are obvious. But what about the nightmares? The panic every time you sit behind the wheel? The way your heart races when you hear tires screeching?

If you've been struggling emotionally after a crash in Pittsburgh or the surrounding area, you're not alone. Psychological trauma after a car accident is very real. However, with the help of a Pittsburgh [car accident lawyer](#), you may be able to receive compensation for it. Here's what you need to know.

What counts as psychological trauma after a car accident?

Psychological trauma refers to the mental and emotional distress that follows a frightening or life-altering experience. In the case of a car crash, that can include:

- Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- Severe anxiety or panic attacks
- Depression or emotional withdrawal

Even if you weren't physically injured in the crash, or if your physical injuries have healed, mental trauma can linger. You might replay the car accident in your head. You might avoid driving altogether. You might struggle to sleep, concentrate, or enjoy things you once loved.

These symptoms aren't just "in your head." They're medical conditions that can impact your health, your relationships, and your ability to work. Plus, they're absolutely recognized under Pennsylvania personal injury law.

What are examples of psychological trauma after a car accident?

A person involved in a head-on collision may avoid highways entirely, experience panic attacks behind the wheel, or relive the crash in their mind over and over, affecting their ability to function day to day.

Additionally, someone who was an active parent or athlete before the crash may fall into a deep depression after being sidelined with long-term pain or disability. They may withdraw from friends, struggle with motivation, or experience feelings of hopelessness and grief over the loss of their former lifestyle.

Can I file a personal injury claim for emotional distress?

In Pennsylvania, emotional distress is considered a valid type of non-economic damage. That means you can seek financial compensation for the mental and emotional toll a car accident has taken on your life, even if your injuries weren't entirely physical.

You may be eligible to recover damages for:

- Emotional pain and suffering
- Anxiety and depression
- Fear of driving or travel
- Loss of enjoyment of life
- Trauma-related relationship strain

Courts and insurance companies take psychological injuries seriously when supported by evidence. In many cases, emotional trauma is a major component of a car accident settlement or verdict.

How do I prove my psychological trauma is real?

To support a claim for emotional trauma, you'll need to provide documentation that shows:

- A professional diagnosis from a psychologist, psychiatrist, or therapist.
- Therapy or counseling records showing ongoing treatment.
- Prescription records if you've been prescribed medication for anxiety, depression, or sleep disorders.
- A personal journal or written account of how the trauma has affected your daily life.

In some cases, a Pittsburgh car accident attorney can bring in expert witnesses such as a trauma specialist to testify on your behalf.

Your story supported by the right documentation can make a strong case. The sooner you seek treatment, the easier it is to draw a clear connection between your car accident and the resulting emotional struggles.

Do I have to be physically injured to file a claim?

If you were physically harmed in the crash, then a claim for psychological trauma can be added to your physical injury case. But even without serious physical injuries, you may still be eligible for compensation, especially if:

- You witnessed a traumatic event (such as a fatal crash).
- You feared for your life during the accident.

- Your emotional symptoms are severe enough to interfere with your daily life.

However, Pennsylvania has unique insurance rules. Depending on your auto policy, you may have “limited tort” coverage, which can restrict your ability to recover compensation for pain and suffering unless your injury meets a certain threshold.

But there’s good news. [Courts have ruled](#) that serious emotional and psychological conditions (for example, diagnosed PTSD) can qualify as serious injuries under Pennsylvania law. That means even limited tort policyholders may be able to pursue these claims.

What if the insurance company doesn’t believe me?

This is one of the biggest challenges in trauma-related cases. Insurance companies tend to believe what they can see, such as broken bones, bruises, and surgery records. Anxiety and flashbacks are harder to quantify. That doesn’t mean you’re out of luck. It just means your claim needs to be supported by:

- Clear and consistent medical documentation
- A timeline showing your symptoms started after the crash
- Evidence of how your life has changed since the accident

Insurance adjusters might push back at first. But if a lawyer presents a strong case, they’ll have a harder time denying that your trauma is real and you deserve help.

How does psychological trauma affect your life?

Trauma isn’t just “being shaken up.” It affects how you function, how you work, and how you connect with the world around you. For example, you might experience:

- Fear of driving or riding in a car
- Insomnia or constant fatigue
- Avoiding certain places or people connected to the crash
- Snapping at loved ones without realizing why
- Feeling hopeless, disconnected, or numb

This isn’t just a phase or a bad week. These symptoms can last for months or even years without proper treatment. Plus, they can cause serious financial strain, including missed work and costly therapy bills.

How much money can I get for psychological trauma?

The amount of money you can get for psychological trauma after a crash depends on the severity of your trauma, how long it affects you, and how much evidence supports your claim.

That's why you should never accept the first settlement offer that comes along. Insurance companies might dispute your claim or offer you as little money as possible.

When someone else's negligence caused this trauma, you shouldn't have to pay the price. Before accepting a settlement, let an experienced Pittsburgh car accident lawyer accurately value your claim and negotiate for every dollar you're owed in damages.

How long do I have to file a claim in Pennsylvania?

In Pennsylvania, the statute of limitations for most car accident injury claims is two years from the date of the crash. That includes claims for psychological trauma.

That may sound like plenty of time, but if you're dealing with delayed-onset symptoms or haven't yet sought treatment, the clock is still ticking. The sooner you reach out for help (both medically and legally) the better your chances of building a strong claim.

Evidence can disappear after a while and witnesses can lose memory of what happened. Once you get the wheels in motion on your claim, a lawyer can promptly investigate your crash and gather the facts to strengthen your case.

Get a trusted Pittsburgh car accident lawyer on your side

If you're struggling with anxiety, depression, or emotional distress after a car accident in Pittsburgh, your claim deserves attention. The Pittsburgh car accident lawyers at [Romanow Law Group](#) can be your legal advocates and fight for the full compensation you're entitled to, not what the insurance companies think your claim is worth.

We understand how these invisible wounds can affect your relationships, your ability to work, and your overall quality of life. That's why we're here to listen, to support you, and handle your case while you focus on recovery. When you reach out to us, your consultation is completely free. We'll answer your questions and explain your legal options. If your trauma has made it difficult to travel or leave the house, we'll come to you.

Because we work on a contingency fee basis, you won't owe us anything unless we win your case. That means no upfront costs and no financial stress; just a dedicated legal team working hard on your behalf. To get started, [contact us online](#) or call our Pittsburgh law office to schedule a free consultation with our legal team.

"I'm very satisfied with his results. I would recommend him to anyone who needs his service. Thank you, David Romanow!" – D.B., ★★★★★