Facial and Dental Injuries in Maine Car Accidents

What These Injuries Cost Goes Far Beyond What Insurers Want to Acknowledge

There are car accident injuries that are immediately visible to anyone who sees you, and there are others that take months of imaging and specialist appointments to diagnose. Facial and dental injuries belong to the first category, and yet they are routinely undervalued in insurance claims, dismissed as cosmetic, and settled for far less than they are actually worth. A broken nose, a jaw fracture, knocked-out teeth, and airbag burns are not minor inconveniences. They are serious traumatic injuries that can require years of treatment, generate tens of thousands of dollars in medical costs, and leave permanent marks on someone's appearance and quality of life.

Experienced Maine car accident lawyers know how to represent crash victims whose facial and dental injuries were treated as afterthoughts by insurance adjusters while the true treatment costs are still accumulating. Maine law allows injured people to pursue full compensation for these injuries, including their long-term consequences, but that recovery rarely happens without legal representation that understands how to document and fight for the real value of the claim.

How Car Accidents Cause Facial and Dental Injuries

The face and mouth are among the most exposed structures in a vehicle collision, positioned directly in the path of the forces a crash generates. In a frontal impact, the head moves forward while the rest of the body is restrained by the seatbelt, bringing the face toward the steering wheel, dashboard, or deploying airbag. In a side-impact collision, the head and face can strike the door, window, or pillar with tremendous force. Even a rear-end crash can snap the head forward and back in a way that causes facial contact with the steering wheel or headrest on rebound.

Airbags complicate this picture considerably. They deploy in milliseconds, expanding outward at very fast speeds. That speed is what makes them effective at cushioning the body before it reaches the steering column, but the same force that prevents a more catastrophic injury can fracture the nose, break teeth, and produce severe friction burns where the nylon fabric contacts the skin. The chemicals used to inflate airbags instantly also release alkaline aerosols that can cause chemical burns to the eyes and surrounding tissue. An airbag doing exactly what it was designed to do can still produce injuries that require surgery and leave permanent scarring.

In crashes where the airbag does not deploy, because the impact didn't reach the deployment threshold, the face is entirely unprotected and can strike hard surfaces at full collision speed.

Steering wheel impacts in those scenarios are among the most common causes of serious facial fractures and dental trauma.

The Most Common Facial and Dental Injuries We See After Maine Crashes

The range of facial and dental injuries in car accidents is wide, and the severity varies considerably depending on the mechanism of impact, the speed involved, and whether airbags deployed. What these injuries share is a tendency to be more medically complex and more expensive to treat than they initially appear. Here are the injuries our Portland personal injury attorneys encounter most often:

- **Facial Lacerations and Abrasions:** Cuts from broken glass, airbag fabric friction, or contact with hard surfaces can range from minor wounds to deep lacerations requiring stitches and leaving permanent scars. Lacerations near the eyes, mouth, or along the jawline are particularly likely to produce visible scarring regardless of how well they heal.
- **Nasal Fractures:** The nose is the most prominent facial structure and the most commonly broken bone in airbag and steering wheel impacts. Even a fracture that doesn’t require surgery can cause permanent changes to the shape of the nose and long-term breathing difficulties if not properly treated.
- **Orbital Fractures:** The bones surrounding the eye socket are thin and can fracture under direct impact or from the pressure wave of airbag deployment. Orbital fractures can affect vision, cause chronic pain, and may require reconstructive surgery to restore normal eye movement and appearance.
- **Broken, Cracked, or Avulsed Teeth:** Teeth can be chipped, cracked, broken at the root, or knocked out entirely in a collision. A single avulsed tooth that requires an implant can cost between $3,000 and $6,000, and multiple teeth lost in the same crash represent a treatment obligation that can stretch across years.
- **Jaw Fractures:** A fractured mandible is one of the most functionally debilitating facial injuries, affecting the ability to eat, speak, and open the mouth. Treatment may require surgical fixation with plates and screws, followed by weeks of restricted jaw movement and a liquid diet during recovery.
- **Temporomandibular Joint (TMJ) Disorder:** Impact to the jaw or forceful contact with the steering wheel can damage the temporomandibular joint, producing chronic pain when chewing or speaking, clicking or locking of the jaw, and headaches that persist long after the visible injuries have healed.
- **Airbag Burns and Chemical Injuries:** Friction burns from airbag fabric can cause second-degree burns requiring wound care and potentially skin grafts. Chemical burns from

deployment aerosols can affect the eyes and skin simultaneously, requiring ophthalmologic evaluation in addition to dermatologic treatment.

- **Corneal and Eye Injuries:** The pressure wave from airbag deployment can cause corneal abrasions and, in more serious cases, retinal damage. Eye injuries from car accidents must be evaluated promptly, as delayed treatment can allow initially manageable damage to worsen significantly.

Identifying all of these injuries at the accident scene or even in the emergency room is not always possible, which is one of the reasons these claims frequently get undervalued before the full picture is known.

Why Dental Injuries Are Particularly Expensive to Treat

Insurance adjusters tend to think of dental injuries in terms of a single procedure, when in reality, restoring crash-damaged teeth almost always involves a cascade of treatments spread over months or years. A tooth that is knocked out requires an implant, which involves surgical placement of a titanium post into the jawbone, a healing period of several months while the post integrates with the bone, and then placement of the final crown. A single dental implant ranges from $3,000 to $6,000, and that figure doesn't account for bone grafting, which may be necessary if bone loss has already begun by the time treatment starts.

A cracked or broken tooth may require a root canal before a crown can be placed. A fractured jaw may need oral surgery before dental restoration is even possible. TMJ disorder may require a separate course of treatment from a specialist, involving custom appliances, injections, or in severe cases, surgical intervention. When several teeth are involved, or when jaw fractures and dental injuries occur together, the total treatment cost can reach five or even six figures before the process is complete.

The critical legal implication is this: Insurance companies routinely make settlement offers before a crash victim has completed dental treatment, or sometimes even before treatment has properly begun. Accepting a settlement at that stage locks in a number that reflects the costs known at that moment, not the full treatment timeline ahead. An attorney can ensure that future treatment costs are documented, estimated by treating specialists, and built into any demand before a settlement is ever considered.

The Psychological and Social Consequences Insurers Ignore

Facial injuries carry a weight that broken bones in other parts of the body do not. The face is central to identity, to how others recognize us, and to how we present ourselves in every professional and personal interaction. Someone who emerges from a car accident with permanent facial scarring, a changed nose, or visible burns doesn't just carry a medical cost.

They carry a daily reminder of the crash, and they navigate a world where that reminder is visible to everyone around them.

Research and clinical experience consistently link visible facial disfigurement to anxiety, depression, reduced self-confidence, and social withdrawal. Someone who works in a client-facing role, who meets with customers, appears on camera, or relies on professional presentation in their career faces consequences that extend well beyond physical pain. Even someone whose livelihood doesn't depend on appearance can find that visible scarring affects how they move through daily life in ways that are genuinely compensable under Maine law.

Maine does not cap non-economic compensation in personal injury cases against private parties. That means the full measure of pain and suffering, emotional distress, and permanent disfigurement can be pursued without an artificial ceiling on recovery. These damages require careful documentation, including photographs taken throughout the healing process, records from treating physicians and mental health professionals, and testimony about how the injury has changed the person's daily life. Without an attorney building that record, non-economic losses are precisely the category where insurance companies most aggressively low-ball.

Other Tactics Insurers Use to Minimize Facial and Dental Injury Claims

Insurance companies approach facial and dental injury claims with a toolkit of strategies designed to reduce what they pay, and they deploy them regardless of how serious the injury actually is. Knowing these tactics in advance is part of protecting the value of a claim.

- **Dismissing Airbag Injuries as a Trade-Off:** The argument, stated or implied, goes roughly like this: the airbag deployed, the airbag saved you from a worse injury, and so the facial injuries caused by the airbag are somehow an offset against what you're owed rather than compensable harm in their own right. This doesn't hold up legally or factually. The airbag deployed because someone else's negligence caused a collision serious enough to trigger it, and the at-fault driver is responsible for every consequence of that crash, including the burns, fractures, and dental injuries the deployment caused.
- **Calling Injuries "Cosmetic" to Reduce Value:** Labeling a facial scar or dental injury as cosmetic is one of the most common ways insurers attempt to reduce what they pay. Cosmetic framing implies elective treatment, subjective harm, and limited compensability. In reality, injuries that affect the function of the jaw, the integrity of the teeth, or the ability to close an eye properly are not cosmetic, and even purely visible scarring has recognized legal value under Maine law.
- **Arguing Dental Injuries Were Pre-Existing:** A prior crown, root canal, missing tooth, or history of dental work gives insurers an opening to claim that the damaged teeth were already compromised before the crash. An attorney can work with treating dentists to

establish a clear before-and-after baseline and demonstrate that the crash caused new damage to previously intact or restored teeth.

- **Disputing Causation on TMJ:** Temporomandibular joint disorder is notoriously difficult to pin to a single cause because the joint is subject to stress from many sources, including clenching, grinding, and prior dental conditions. Insurers routinely challenge TMJ claims on causation grounds, and these cases almost always benefit from expert medical support connecting the onset of symptoms to the crash.
- **Refusing to Account for Future Treatment Costs:** An insurer valuing a dental injury claim before treatment is complete will typically calculate only the costs already incurred. Future implants, additional surgeries, scar revision procedures, and ongoing specialist care represent real projected losses that belong in any fair settlement demand.
- **Making Quick Settlement Offers Before the Full Picture Is Known:** Early settlement offers in facial injury cases are particularly dangerous precisely because the full treatment timeline for dental work, reconstructive procedures, and scar revision often spans years. An offer made in the first weeks or months after a crash is almost never adequate to cover what the injury will actually cost.

Insurance companies move quickly after accidents because early settlement locks in lower numbers. An attorney who knows how these claims develop over time can ensure that no settlement is considered until the full medical and financial picture is clear.

What Your Facial or Dental Injury Claim Can Actually Be Worth

The value of a facial or dental injury claim reflects every category of loss the injury produces. On the economic side, that means emergency treatment costs, specialist fees, oral surgery, dental implants and restorations, reconstructive procedures, scar revision surgery if pursued, and any future treatment projected by treating physicians. It means lost wages for time away from work during recovery or surgical procedures. For injuries that affect a person's ability to perform their job, lost earning capacity is also a compensable loss.

On the non-economic side, Maine law allows recovery for pain and suffering, emotional distress, and permanent disfigurement. Facial scarring that is visible and permanent carries significant value under this framework, and Maine's absence of a cap on non-economic compensation in standard personal injury cases means those losses can be pursued fully. The combination of documented economic losses and well-supported non-economic claims is what produces recoveries that genuinely reflect the impact of the injury rather than what an insurer initially offers.

Steps to Protect Your Claim After a Facial or Dental Injury

What happens in the days and weeks after a crash shapes the strength of a facial or dental injury claim more than most people realize. A few steps matter most.

Photograph injuries immediately and repeatedly throughout the healing process. Facial injuries change dramatically as swelling recedes and bruising evolves, and a photographic record taken at multiple stages captures the full visual trajectory of the harm. See a dentist or oral surgeon promptly even if teeth feel stable, because cracks and root damage that don't produce immediate symptoms can worsen and become significantly more expensive to treat if caught later.

Follow through on all referrals from treating physicians, including to ophthalmologists for eye injuries and mental health professionals if anxiety or depression develops. Keep every record, receipt, and medical note related to the injury. Do not give a recorded statement to the at-fault driver's insurance company before speaking with an attorney. And do not accept any settlement offer before your treatment is complete and your long-term prognosis is clearly established.

We Do Whatever It Takes to Recover What You're Owed

Facial and dental injuries deserve to be taken as seriously as any other crash injury, and the at-fault driver's insurance company should not decide what your injuries are worth. At Romanow Law Group, our Portland personal injury lawyers are committed to making sure that every cost, every consequence, and every long-term impact of a facial or dental injury is documented and pursued. We do whatever it takes for our clients, and we don't stop when an insurer makes a lowball offer.

We handle personal injury claims for Maine crash victims on a contingency fee basis, meaning you pay nothing unless we recover compensation for you. If you or a family member has suffered facial or dental injuries in a car accident anywhere in Maine, contact us today for a free consultation.