

# Back pain drives you mad!



## Don't get stuck in a jam.



[www.backcare.org.uk](http://www.backcare.org.uk)

Telephone: 020 8977 5474

Registered Charity No. 256751

## Driving and back pain

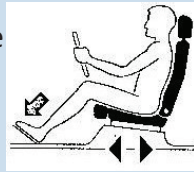
If you drive fairly long distances to and from work every day (driving for over half an hour) or your job specifically involves long hours of driving, you may have experienced back pain; and you wouldn't be alone. Approximately 30-60% of drivers report back pain that is caused or made worse by driving. This is not uncommon as driving exposes the body to many different forces including acceleration, deceleration and most notably vibration. Larger heavy goods vehicle drivers are exposed to a lot of vibration and consequently this group of people report more back pain. Driving also involves the use of your feet to control the car's pedals which means they are not used to help stabilise and support your lower body as they normally would when sitting. A combination of these factors as well as the inadequate design of some vehicle seats can cause back problems for some.

### Top tips

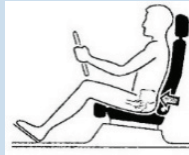
- Know your limit by testing how long you can drive for before your pain begins. Knowing how long will allow you to be able to take regular breaks before the pain begins
- Take regular breaks to move around and do back stretches. Also stretch before you begin a journey, any time it is possible and safe to do so during your journey and after the journey
- Being comfortably seated is very important when driving. Ensure your seat is adjusted so it is comfortable for you and if your vehicle does not have lumbar support seating, use a lumbar support cushion to support your back.

**Below are some things to consider to ensure you are seated comfortably.**

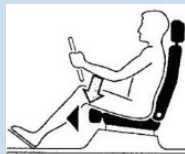
Sit with your buttocks as close as possible to the backrest - adjust the distance to the pedals so your legs are slightly bent when you press a pedal to the floor.



A lumbar support is properly adjusted when the natural curvature of your lower spine is fully supported.



Adjust the tilt of the seat so you can easily press the pedals down to the floor. Your thighs should rest lightly on the seat cushion without pressing on it.



Adjust the seat length so your thighs are in contact with the seat almost up to the back of the knees. The distance between the edge of the seat and the back of your knees should be about two or three fingers wide.



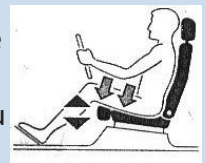
Adjust the height of the seat to the highest comfortable position. This ensures that you will have a clear view on all sides and of dashboard instruments.



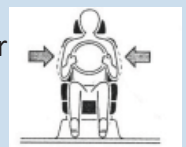
Check the angle of your head rest. The upper edge should be aligned with the top of your head. Adjust to allow about three quarters of an inch between your head and the headrest.



Sit with your shoulders as close as possible to the backrest. Adjust the angle of the backrest so that you can easily reach the steering wheel with your arms bent. Your shoulders should remain in contact with the backrest when you turn the steering wheel.



The backrest side bolsters should be positioned close enough to your upper torso to provide comfortable lateral support without restricting movement.



## General Driving Advice

- Try to maintain good driving posture; this is easier to do if you take regular breaks
- If possible, on long journeys try to share the driving with another person. Being a passenger will allow you to move around more, alleviating the stress on your back
- Take care when getting in and out of your vehicle; do not twist your back but rather rotate your whole body
- Take care when loading and unloading items from your vehicle; carry smaller loads close to your body and remember to bend your knees when lifting
- If driving is part of your job talk to your employer or HR department about your back pain, they may be able to come up with ways to help you e.g. changes to your vehicle or fewer driving hours
- Exercise as it helps keep your back strong and healthy decreasing the risk of developing back pain!

## Useful Exercises

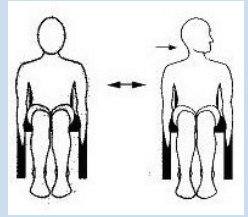
Exercise is a great way to prevent and manage back pain. Here are some useful exercises you can try. If you have an existing back condition you may want to skip some exercises such as the forward bend and do only those that do not exacerbate your pain.

**(see over)**

## **While driving (only when safe to do so)**

### **Neck and shoulder stretches**

- Look to the left and hold for a count of three
- Return to central position
- Look to the right and hold for a count of three
- Try not to compress the neck
- You can do this while driving but **ONLY** when it is safe to do so e.g. when in heavy traffic!



Repeat 10 times

## **Before or after a journey**

### **Forward Bend**

- Stand with your feet hip width apart and your knees bent
- Contract your stomach muscles and slowly roll down as far as you can - don't overstretch
- Allow your arms to fall towards your feet then gently straighten up to your starting position

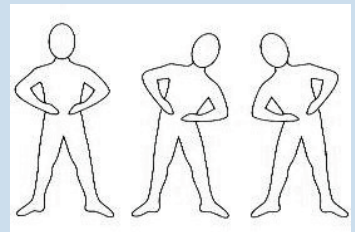


Repeat 10 times.

## **When taking a break from driving**

### **Side bends**

- Start with your feet hip width apart, hands on hips
- Bend slowly to the left and then slowly to the right
- Do not tilt forward



Repeat 10 times.

## **When at home**

### **Cat's pose**

- Arch your back (looking down)
- Lower your stomach towards the floor - hollow your back (looking up)
- If you're pregnant don't hollow your back - keep it straight



Repeat 10 times.



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