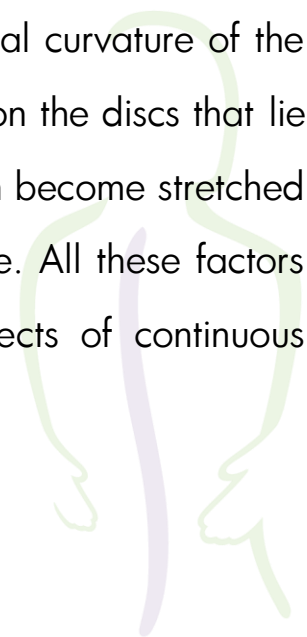


What's driving back pain? Getting positioned for safety and comfort

Ninety per cent of journeys in North America are made in vehicles. Yet we place little emphasis on our safety and comfort while in them... until pain and discomfort sets in. If you feel stiff or experience back, thigh, or leg pain after a drive, you could be at risk of developing driving-related injuries.

In recent surveys of taxi cab and truck drivers, approximately 50 per cent were shown to have low back pain related to their jobs. Other at risk employees include couriers, forklift operators, and commuters who drive for more than an hour and a half during most weekdays.

Sitting for long periods of time can cause the natural curvature of the low back to flatten. This flattening places pressure on the discs that lie between the bones or vertebrae of the spine, which become stretched and slackened, resulting in pain and muscle fatigue. All these factors leave the body less prepared to handle the effects of continuous vibrations from the bumps and potholes in the road.



Don't despair! These simple tips can be very effective in reducing musculoskeletal problems related to driving.

The Driving Seat

Position the seat so that you can hold the steering wheel and depress the gas and brake pedals without leaning forward. When your feet are on the pedals your knees should be at the level of, or slightly higher, than your hips.

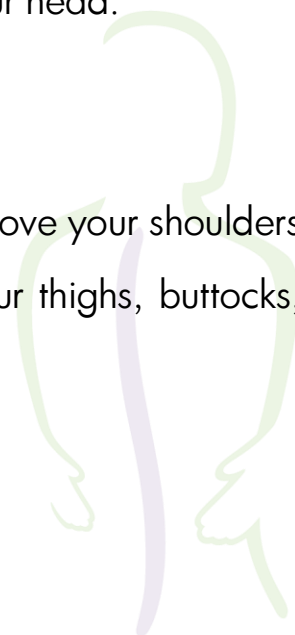
The seatback should recline at an angle of 100 - 110 degrees in order to relieve pressure on the discs of the spine.

The Headrests

Ensure that the top of the headrest is level with your eyes, and the back, a maximum distance of 2 - 5 cm from the back of your head.

Exercises

While holding the steering wheel, try to shrug and move your shoulders in small circles. Regularly tighten the muscles of your thighs, buttocks, and legs to encourage circulation.



Take frequent breaks!

Aim to take a break at least five minutes every hour. Perform gentle activity and stretches during your breaks i.e. walk around, stand on your tiptoes and then heels. Take your low back through its natural range of motion by leaning back, bending forward and bending sideways at the waist.

Doctors of chiropractic are specialists, who provide drug-free, hands-on treatment that targets the source of pain. Studies show that chiropractic treatment is increasingly recognized as one of the safest and most effective solutions for most back pain sufferers.

