Are you sitting comfortably?
A drivers guide from Alphabet

Back trouble is almost as prevalent as the common cold, affecting 4 out of 5 people.

Over 14 million people are affected by a Repetitive Driving Injury, with millions of working days lost costing over £1 billion a year in loss of earnings.

The following guide should provide you with some useful tips about adjusting the various parts of your vehicle’s seat to help keep your neck and back in the optimum position for driving.

Many of us spend an hour a day in the car, taking the kids to school, travelling to work and running errands. But have you taken the time to consider how your driving position may be causing significant stress to your neck and back?

When driving you need to ensure you are sitting in a comfortable position that’s right for you. However, even whilst commuting you should try and adopt a range of comfortable positions, as even good posture held for a period of time could be detrimental.

Your driving position should be individual, flexible and fine tuned to suit your body in order to avoid suffering from a repetitive driving injury.

The most common repetitive driving injuries are:

- foot cramp
- lower back pain
- neck pain
- headaches

How do you ensure you are sitting comfortably?

You don’t need to request a new car or fear that you will need to do some spine cracking exercises in order sit comfortably. Generally it’s not the car it’s the seating position that needs to be changed. There are some simple things you can do. Firstly you should start with a seat in completely the wrong position before making any adjustments.

Your seat should be far enough forward and your knee slightly bent when you fully extend the clutch pedal. Locking your knees can cause reduced circulation and may lead to you becoming woozy or even passing out.

Tilt the seat so it supports your bottom and thighs evenly. Make sure your thighs extend past the seat so the back of your knees do not make contact with the seat (if possible).

Your seat back should be tilted back slightly between 100-110 degrees to decrease pressure on your lower back. Your shoulders should remain in contact with the back of the seat when you turn the wheel.

The height of the seat should be adjusted so you can easily see the road, your mirrors and the dashboard clearly. Be careful not to raise it so high that your legs will interfere with the steering wheel.
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If your vehicle has one, adjust the lumbar support. The curve of your spine should be evenly supported, don’t overdo it; it should be a gentle, even support.

Holding the steering wheel at 9 and 3 o’clock will relax your shoulder muscles. Also try to keep your hands straight whilst holding the wheel. Be aware that holding the wheel for prolonged periods could contribute to carpal tunnel syndrome in your hands.

Reposition the mirrors so that you can see around the vehicle easily. If you slouch or get into a bad seating position you will not be able to see into the mirrors clearly if you find yourself in this position, this is your cue to reposition yourself.

Removing your wallet from your back pocket will ensure your pelvis is not twisted which can put stress on your back.

Getting into a car you should sit first then swing your legs in then do the reverse when leaving the vehicle.

If you drive for long periods you should take a break and stretch every couple of hours. This should reduce the stress on your back.

Don’t be tempted to put your laptop in the passenger seat and start working as this may twist your spine.

Don’t put things on the back seat and be tempted to reach for them as this may also twist your spine.

Don’t hold the steering wheel at the top with one or the other hand.

Remembering to check the above each time you enter a new vehicle (or after someone else has driven your vehicle) should help to ensure your driving position is at the optimum for your comfort and safety.

For further information on this topic please visit www.backcare.org.uk

If you have any questions please contact us on 0370 50 50 100