

If your job involves driving a vehicle for any length of time, here are some things you can do to avoid

back pain



Back conditions and back pain generally don't just happen overnight – very often they are caused by longer term bad posture habits consolidated by poor general fitness or getting older. This fact sheet gives some key tips on how to avoid the onset of a back condition in jobs which involve long periods of vehicle usage.

Typical causes of back pain

- ⚠ Sitting in a vehicle for long periods without a break.
- ⚠ Twisting the body when getting into and out of the seat.
- ⚠ Incorrect adjustment of your seat.
- ⚠ Seats that cause you to sit with your knees higher than your hips.
- ⚠ Poor posture with lack of lumbar support.
- ⚠ Sitting with your head pushing forwards.
- ⚠ Poor positioning of hands when gripping the steering wheel or gripping the wheel too tightly.

The Stop Checklist

When you get a chance to break your journey, here are some examples of things you can try to reduce the risk of developing a back condition or back pain:

- When stopping at a service station, park away from the foyer so that you get some enforced exercise by having to walk that little bit further.
- If you stop to use your mobile phone, get out of the car and walk round it.
- Whenever you stop, always try doing one or two gentle stretches.

More info: www.backproactive.com

Things you can do

- ✓ Are you sitting comfortably? – good posture is the single most important factor in reducing the risk of developing a back problem.
- ✓ You should be able to reach all controls and pedals without stretching – adjust your seat to the optimum position.
- ✓ Does your seat have adequate support for the lumbar region of your back? – if not, simple lumbar supports are available, or even using a rolled up towel will help.
- ✓ Avoid bad posture habits such as slouching or hunching, leaning on an arm rest or door for long periods.
- ✓ Adjust all your mirrors to the optimum position to avoid having to twist.
- ✓ Make sure your head rest is correctly adjusted to prevent your head from being thrown backwards in the event of a sudden stop or impact from another vehicle.
- ✓ Most of all, try and make sure you take regular breaks on a long journey. Do a few gentle stretches to relieve any stiffness, especially before attempting to lift heavy luggage etc.

Keep yourself fit

Back pain is more likely to occur if your general level of fitness is low and/or you are overweight. Some regular physical exercise will help strengthen your back as well as reducing stiffness and tension.