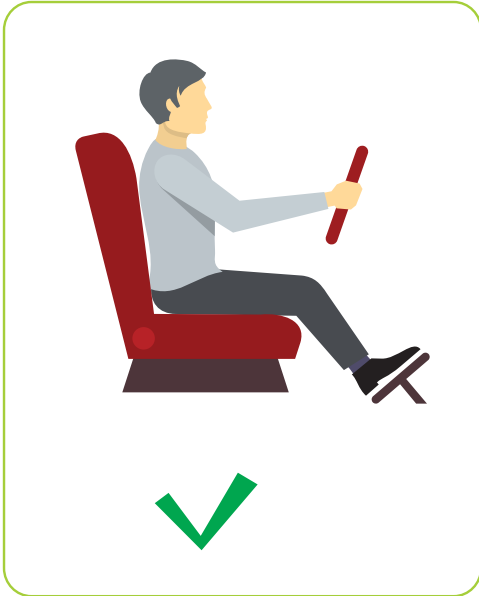


PROPER POSTURE WHILE DRIVING



An achy back, stiff neck, sore shoulders, body fatigue. The everyday shakes, rattles and rolls of daily commuting – or long drives – can take a toll on your body.

The vehicles we drive are part of the problem. Some car seats don't adequately accommodate the curve of the lower back, putting additional strain on the spine. And compact cars may lack legroom and head space, forcing some drivers to contort their bodies into unhealthy positions just to operate the vehicle.

But it's not always the car's fault; sometimes the problem is simply how we sit. Poor driving posture can lead to an increased risk of discomfort in the neck, back, shoulders, arms, wrists, fingers, legs and feet. Over time bad posture can result in chronic pain, making you vulnerable to more injuries.

And sore limbs may be the least of it: Poorly positioned drivers also have an increased risk of serious injury if they get into an accident, according to a scientific study published by the International Conference on Advanced Engineering Materials and Technology.¹

Fortunately, you can alleviate many posture-related discomforts and dangers with proper adjustment of the driver's seat and mirrors.

PROPER POSTURE WHILE DRIVING

1

Support your back

Sit with your tailbone as close to the seat back as possible. Aim for a two- to three-finger gap between the back of your knees and the front of your car seat. If your vehicle doesn't allow for the proper position, a lumbar or back cushion may help.

2

Lift your hips

If you can, adjust your "seat pan" (the part you sit on) so that your thighs are supported along their entire length and your knees are slightly lower than your hips. This will increase circulation to your back while opening your hips.

3

Don't sit too close

You should be able to comfortably reach the pedals and press them through their full range with your entire foot. Safety is also a consideration here; the study noted above suggested that drivers whose chests were closer to the steering wheel were significantly more likely to suffer severe injuries to the head, neck and chest in both front- and rear-end collisions, compared to drivers positioned further back from the steering wheel.

4

Get the right height

Make sure your seat raises your eye level at least three inches above the steering wheel while allowing enough clearance between your head and the roof.

5

Lean back - a little

The angle of your seat back should be a little greater than a perpendicular 90 degrees. At 100 to 110 degrees, the seat will put the least pressure on your back. Leaning too far back forces you to push your head and neck forward, which can cause neck and shoulder pain and tingling in the fingers.

6

Set your headrest

Set the top of the headrest between the top of your ears and the top of your head; it should just touch the back of your head when you're sitting comfortably. The headrest plays a crucial role in reducing whiplash injuries in the event of a rear-end collision.

7

Use lumbar support

If your car has adjustable lumbar support, set it (using both the front-back and up-down controls), so you feel an even pressure from your hips to your shoulders. If your car doesn't have automatic support, a lumbar pillow or even a rolled-up towel can help.

8

Adjust your mirrors

Prevent neck strain by making sure your rearview and side mirrors are properly adjusted; you should be able to see the traffic behind you, on either side and straight back, without having to crane your neck.

9

Take breaks

Even when you're perfectly situated in the driver's seat, fatigue will inevitably set in, especially when you're driving for long periods. Listen to your body. And take periodic breaks. Park safely at a rest stop or other designated stopping area to get out of the car and stretch.

1. Xiao Luo, Wenjing Du, Shucai Xu, Jie Yang and Jinhuan Zhang, Effects of a Forward Displaced Position on Driver Injury Levels in Frontal Crashes, Proceedings of the 2015 International Conference on Advanced Engineering Materials and Technology, Atlantis Press, August 2015, <https://www.atlantis-press.com/proceedings/icaemt-15/25839256>.