

Guide to Driving Health



exeter*physio*

Sports, spinal and rehabilitation clinic
Chartered Physiotherapists

www.exeterphysio.co.uk

Seeing us will make the difference!

Choosing a car - what to look for

The more adjustable features within your car, the more likely you are to achieve good and comfortable postures. When choosing a car, pay attention to the following guidelines.

Seating

- Choose a comfortable supportive seat that allows you to adjust the height and tilt independently of each other.
- The base of the seat should support your thighs and allow adequate space between the edge of the seat and your knee, avoiding pressure behind knee.
- The seat should be wider than your hips and thighs.
- Adjusting seat height should allow your feet to reach pedals without stretching. You should also be able to reach all hand controls easily and be able to view all instrumentation and have good all round vision.

Head rest

- The head rest should be height and tilt adjustable, to allow light contact with the back of your head.

Back rest

- The back rest should come to shoulder height and should not obstruct your rear vision. It should be wide enough to support your shoulders.

Lumbar support

- The back rest should provide support along the whole length of the back, and an adjustable lumbar support may help achieve this.
- An adjustable lumbar support should offer up/down and in/out adjustment.
- Ensure lumbar support fits your shape and is comfortable.

Steering wheel

- Choose an adjustable steering wheel that can move in and out, up and down, and can tilt.
- Power steering will take the strain off your back.
- The steering wheel should be positioned centrally, thus avoiding any undue strain on your back.
- The steering wheel shouldn't obstruct display panel.

Pedals

- Pedals should be positioned centrally with adequate space in between, and at the side, to allow straightening of legs. Offset pedals can put extra pressure on the spine.

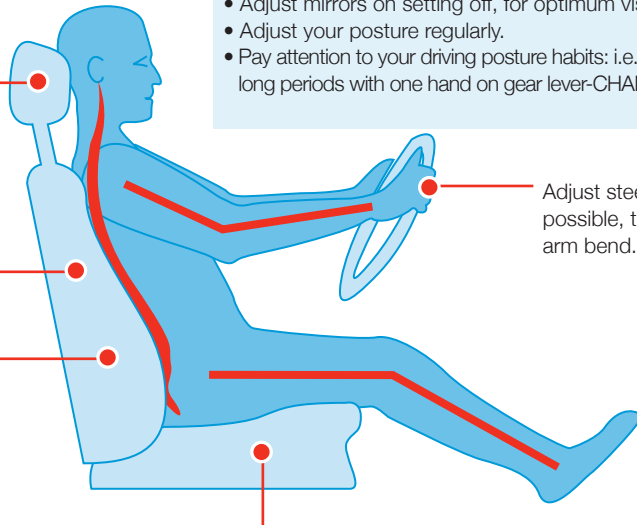
Driving position guidelines

Slouching, leaning and bending in your car seat can lead to discomfort and long term pain. Use this quick setup sheet to aid a comfortable environment.

Balanced head position, light headrest touch. Not pushing head forward.

Back rest in contact with whole spine to base of neck. Comfortably vertical.

Lumbar support large enough to prevent "spine sag".



Thighs horizontal, no pressure behind knees.


Top Tips


- Adjust mirrors on setting off, for optimum visibility.
- Adjust your posture regularly.
- Pay attention to your driving posture habits: i.e. if you rest for long periods with one hand on gear lever-CHANGE NOW!


Adjust steering wheel if possible, to allow relaxed arm bend.


Driving exercises


1  Sit or stand. Roll your shoulders in both directions for a count of 10.

2  In sitting, hold the chair. Lean your head and trunk away from the fixed arm, feel gentle stretch down the side of the neck and arm. Hold for a count of 5. Repeat on both sides.

3  Sitting straight-backed. Pull your chin in, keeping your neck and back straight (do not tilt your head forwards or backwards). Hold at the end position for a count of 5 and feel the stretch in the back of your neck.

4  Stand straight with one hand on your hip and the other straight up. Bend to the side with opposite arm reaching overhead. Keep pelvis in mid-position. Hold for 5 sec. and repeat to opposite side.

5  Stand straight with feet apart. Support your back with your hands while bending your back as far backwards as possible. Keep your knees straight during exercise. Hold for a count of 2 and repeat 5 times.

6  Sit on a chair and cross your arms over your chest clasp the opposite shoulder. Twist from the waist into stiffness. Repeat to both sides in a continual smooth motion.

NB: These exercises should be done slowly, painlessly and frequently.

Adjusting your seat

Step One

- Raise the seat as high as is comfortable to improve your vision of the road.
- Check you have adequate clearance from the roof.

Step two

- Move the seat forwards until you can easily fully depress the clutch pedal and accelerator pedal.

Step three

- Adjust cushion tilt angle so that the thighs are level with knees and supported along the length of cushion.
- Avoid pressure behind the knee.

Step four

- Adjust back rest so it provides continuous support along the length of the back and is in contact up to shoulder height.
- Avoid reclining the seat too far as this will cause excessive forward bending of the head and neck, and you may feel yourself sliding forwards on the cushion.

Step five

- Adjust lumbar support to ensure even pressure along the length of back rest.
- Ensure lumbar support 'fits' your back, is comfortable with no pressure points or gaps.

Step six

- Adjust the steering wheel rearwards and downwards for easy reach.
- Check clearance for thighs/knees when using pedals.
- Ensure display panel is in full view and not obstructed.

Step seven

- Adjust the head restraint to ensure the risk of injury is reduced in the event of a car accident.

These adjustments rely on your car being adjustable. It may not be, so there are aftermarket products available to help you achieve comfort. Ask us for details.

Driving posture

Any posture, no matter how good it is, can lead to discomfort if held for too long. It is important to adopt a range of comfortable driving positions and make frequent changes to avoid or delay the onset of discomfort.

You should take regular breaks and drive no more than 4 hours a day. Take a break of at least 5 minutes every two hours. You should get out of your car and walk around on each break and perform a range of stretches.

Avoid using your car as an office. Tasks such as using a laptop and sorting paperwork in a car cause you to bend forwards, increasing stress on your body.



The Clinic

Exeter Physio, sports and spinal clinic was established in 1979. We are the largest leading independent private clinic in the region. We reach the highest standards set by our professional bodies and deliver the finest treatment for your optimum recovery.

What do we do?

We are experts in assessing and treating many conditions such as back pain, sciatica, neck pain, RSI, shoulder, postural & occupational problems. We specialise in using different types of manual therapy (manipulation and mobilisations of joints and soft tissues), exercises, including Pilates and gym ball work, muscle imbalance/postural correction & electrotherapy. Our philosophy is to provide the highest standard of treatment when it is needed. We can guide you through your rehabilitation to full function, whether that is a return to work or full sporting activity, whatever your level. Our client base ranges from recreational & professional international sports people to non-sporting everyday aches and pains, GP, consultant and work related occupational referrals. We will also be able to advise you on preventative regimes and lifestyle adjustments to minimise the risk of re-injury.



A word of advice

Whilst this guide aims to facilitate your optimal health whilst driving, adjustments may cause some people to experience a temporary mild increase in symptoms. Provided these guidelines are implemented progressively and consistently, increased symptoms should quickly settle. Should any increase in aches and pains persist, stop all exercises and call our clinic for further advice.

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