

How to Stop Your Neck from Hurting While Driving or Sitting in a Car

Whenever possible you should opt for the passage seat. It is easier to get your neck comfortable when not driving. However, we will discuss both scenarios.

We hope to convey to you a key point of sitting and back pain is the benefit of movement and change of positions. The most important tactic you can use to combat back pain while sitting is to intermix the sitting with walking and movement. Even the person who attempts to sit with the perfect posture should still intermix change of back positions, movement, and walking.

Foam Back Supports

We believe it is important to use back supports to help avoid the “C” position and to obtain a good sitting posture when in the car. Driving in a vehicle is generally extremely hard on your entire spine, including the neck. This is especially true if you are driving with a slumped posture. Vibration and road shock will place even further stress on your neck.



In this picture one can see a foam roll is being used to keep the spine from slumping into the “C” position.

Proper placement of a foam support



1. The foam roll should be placed approximately at the level of your belt. (either a little higher or lower - depending on comfort).
2. Your bottom should be slid all the way back in the seat.
3. Lean back against the roll and attempt to keep your body in straight alignment.

Your body type and specific back problem will dictate the size of back support you need. A larger person with greater curves is more likely to require a thicker back support. If the roll feels like it is too much, you may want to try a thinner support. Before you purchase a foam back support, we recommend you try the following: Take a towel and roll it into a tube shape. Place it behind your back when sitting and gauge your comfort level.

If you decide to use the rolled towel for a longer trial period - you may want to duct tape the ends to prevent it from unraveling.

Once you have decided on a thickness you have the option of purchase a back support with a similar feel.

We also recommend using a support to help prevent neck (and back) pain from occurring or reoccurring.

It is important to follow these rules when driving or after driving.

1. Avoid long trips when recovering or experiencing pain in your neck or from a pinched nerve.
2. If you need to drive, stop every half hour, and walk a bit. Perform your neck exercises during the break.
3. Do not slump. Use a back support or rolled towel as already suggested.



4. Use your left foot to prevent your bottom from sliding forward on your seat, which causes your back to slump. Use the stationary inclined footrest (dead pedal) located to the left side of the brake pedal (if this feature is available on your car).

5. Try moving your car seat slightly forward. When your knees are too straight, the tendency will be for your bottom to slip forward on the seat and cause you to slump.



Slumped with knees straight



Correct Posture



6. Lower your hands on the steering wheel. The least stressful and fatiguing position for the arms, and neck, when driving is with the arms hanging nearly vertical. This is accomplished by placing your hands on the steering wheel in the nine o'clock - three o'clock position or the eight o'clock - four o'clock position.



Placing your hands on the steering wheel in the ten o'clock - two o'clock position will cause your upper back and shoulders to round forward.

7. Excessive back inclination will also cause your back to slump forward.

8. Avoid reaching to the back seat. This will cause your neck to bend and twist.



9. Use proper technique for getting into and out of a car. When getting out of the car, pivot your whole body as a unit on the seat while you bring one leg out of the car at a time. For support, grasp the doorframe or steering wheel. When both legs are out of the car, scoot forward on the seat. Move your feet back, under you as far as possible. Then, lean forward from your hips, keeping your back straight. Finally, stand with assistance from the doorframe or steering wheel.



When Sitting in the Passenger Seat

When seated in the passenger seat you should follow the same basic rules for good posture as outlined in this printout. In addition, you may try a few additional things. You may try reclining your seat. This will reduce the stress on your neck if your head is supported by the neck rest. You cannot do this while driving because it will result in a forward head posture.

Take a pillow along on the car ride and support both arms with it. This will ease some of the stress off your neck pain or a pinched nerve.

Try the sock secret. Roll up a pair of clean gym socks into a ball like shape. In addition to using a low back support, place the sock ball at approximately C7 or slightly below. C7 is usually the most predominant bump on your spine at the base of your neck. This should absolutely feel comfortable - or do not use it. This works well if there is a dip in your back rest (near the upper back) which is causing your upper back to slouch and causing your neck to be in a forward head position.

It works well for taller drivers (Bob is 6'6"). And is great for doing chin tucks against it.

Remember your goal is to keep your neck in proper alignment. By keeping your neck in proper alignment, you are STOPPING A CONTRIBUTING FACTOR TO YOUR NECK PAIN.