



CHARTERED  
SOCIETY  
OF  
PHYSIOTHERAPY



# DRIVE CLEAR OF PAIN

THE KEY TO  
DRIVING WELL

SIMPLE TIPS FOR  
STAYING FIT

YOU WILL BE  
SITTING PRETTY

A COMFORTABLE RIDE WITH  
ERGONOMIC ADVICE



BROUGHT TO YOU BY  
THE CHARTERED SOCIETY OF PHYSIOTHERAPY

**THIS LEAFLET IS AIMED AT COMMERCIAL DRIVERS, BUT THE ADVICE IS ALSO GOOD FOR THE SCHOOL RUN.**

# INDUCTION

## POLE POSITION

Professional and commercial drivers can experience a range of musculoskeletal problems, including back, neck, shoulder and leg pain. Poor ergonomics and sitting in the same position behind the wheel for a long time are key factors

## POLE POSITION

→ continued...

in driver discomfort. So let's make driving more comfortable.

Here's a step-by-step guide to correct car set-up, plus some simple stretches for when you take a break from the wheel.

**PEOPLE AND CARS ARE DIFFERENT SHAPES SO...**

- ...take several long test-drives before committing to a new car.



## ON YOUR MARKS:

Put your car seat into the factory setting position before adjusting it to fit you:

- **Set steering wheel** fully up and forward
- **Set your seat height** at its lowest
- **Cushion tilted** so front edge is at lowest position
- **Back rest** to be approximately 30° reclined from vertical
- **Lumbar adjustment** backed off
- **Seat positioned** fully rearwards.

# POSTURE PURSUIT

A GOOD DRIVING POSITION REDUCES UNNECESSARY DISCOMFORT AND BACK PROBLEMS



**ENSURE  
MAX  
VISION  
OF THE  
ROAD  
& GOOD  
PEDAL  
CONTROL**

# Get ready!

*The next steps need only be done once if you're the sole driver. But if you share a vehicle, where your set-up position could be changed, follow these tips each time you get behind the wheel.*

**1<sup>st</sup> Raise the seat**  
*as high as is comfortable to ensure maximum vision of the road*  
**Check you have adequate clearance from the roof**

**2<sup>nd</sup> Move the seat forwards**  
*until you can fully depress the clutch and accelerator pedals*  
**Adjust the seat height**  
*as necessary for good pedal control*

**3<sup>rd</sup> Adjust cushion tilt angle**  
*so that the thighs are supported along the length of the cushion*  
**Avoid pressure**  
*behind the knee.*



# THE STARTING GRID

# JUST A MINUTE...



NOW YOU CAN  
TURN THE KEY



FINALLY

NEXT

THEN

- **ADJUST ANGLE** OF THE BACK REST SO IT PROVIDES CONTINUOUS SUPPORT ALONG THE LENGTH OF THE BACK 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
- **ADJUST STEERING WHEEL** REARWARDS AND DOWNWARDS FOR EASY REACH
- **CHECK FOR CLEARANCE** FOR THIGHS/KNEES WHEN USING PEDALS
- **ENSURE DISPLAY PANEL** IS IN FULL VIEW AND NOT OBSTRUCTED
- **ADJUST LUMBAR SUPPORT** FOR EVEN PRESSURE ALONG THE LENGTH OF THE BACK REST
- **MAKE SURE LUMBAR SUPPORT** 'FITS' YOUR BACK, IS COMFORTABLE WITH NO PRESSURE POINTS OR GAPS
- **ADJUST HEAD RESTRAINT** TO REDUCE THE RISK OF INJURY IN THE EVENT OF AN ACCIDENT.



## A PAIN IN THE NECK

A correctly adjusted head restraint is important to reduce the severity of a whiplash injury (caused by the head being thrown forwards and back or sideways, as can happen in car accidents). Seek physiotherapy treatment as early as possible if you suffer a whiplash injury.



# HAVE YOURSELF A SAFE TRIP

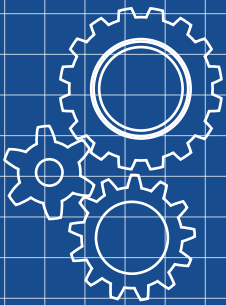
WITH A CORRECTLY **ADJUSTED** HEAD RESTRAINT

## TAKE A BREAK

To help avoid the onset of fatigue, plan journeys carefully to allow for regular breaks. The Highway Code recommends a 15-min. break at least every two hours. During breaks get out, go for a short walk and stretch.



# ERGONOMICS: INSIDE THE CAR



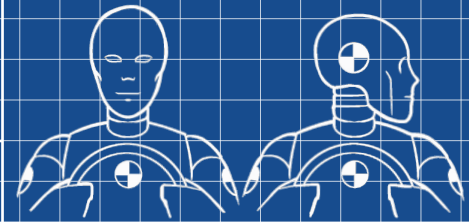
**ALL PARTS:  
CONNECT**

**HEAD:** about an inch  
away from head restraint.

**ELBOWS BENT:**  
at 30°-40°.

**BOTH KNEES:**  
slightly bent.  
Left knee should  
be slightly bent  
when clutching.

**BACK AND  
SHOULDERS:**  
resting firmly  
on the seat.



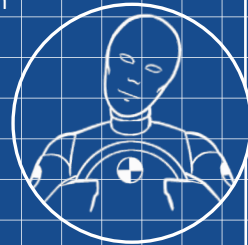
**PARKED UP? ENGINE OFF?  
TRY THESE:**

**SHOULDERS:** Shrug your shoulders up and down and roll them forwards and backwards to relieve tension.

**UPPER ARMS AND CHEST:** Interlock your hands together with palms out, stretch arms forward and hold, then up to the roof and hold.

**LEGS AND FEET:** When your feet are off the pedals, bend your knees so your feet are flat on the floor then push on the balls of the feet until the heels rise up.

**NECK:** Slowly tilt your ear towards your right shoulder and hold, then repeat on the left side. Place your chin towards your chest and hold. Look straight ahead and turn your head from left to right, holding at each side.



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All illustrations by: **LEE SULLIVAN**

## AVOID!

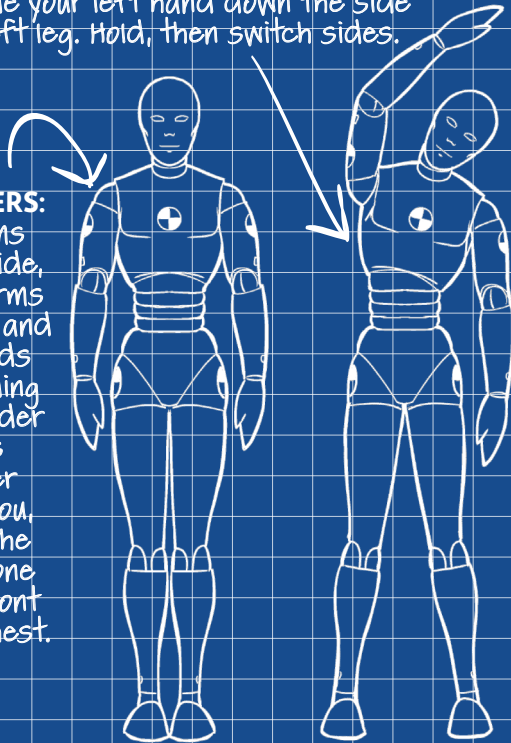
AVOID REMAINING IN ONE FIXED DRIVING POSTURE. ANY POSTURE, NO MATTER HOW GOOD IT IS, CAN LEAD TO DISCOMFORT IF IT IS HELD FOR TOO LONG. ADOPT A RANGE OF SAFE, COMFORTABLE DRIVING POSITIONS.



# TRY THESE: ON A BREAK

**SIDE:** Raise your right arm above your head and slowly bend to your left. As you bend, slide your left hand down the side of your left leg. Hold, then switch sides.

**SHOULDERS:** with arms by your side, roll the arms outwards and backwards while sliding the shoulder blades together behind you, raising the breastbone at the front of your chest.



**HAMSTRINGS:** Standing outside your car, stretch one leg out in front and rest your heel on the ground with your foot facing up. Lean forward slightly and look straight ahead to feel a stretch in the back of your thigh.



**LOWER BACK:** Standing with your feet hip-width apart, push your hands on your hips, push your hips slightly forward and arch backwards.

**SPINAL COLUMN:**  
LATERAL VIEW



**X-TRA FACTORS**

Many factors can contribute to back problems, so think about your lifestyle away from the car. Regular exercise and maintaining a good posture at work and when relaxing at home can help ward off back pain.



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**DISCLAIMER** These activities have been designed to cover a range of abilities and should not cause any harm. If you experience any pain or discomfort, stop immediately and speak to a health professional such as a chartered physiotherapist or your GP.

**CONSULT!**

**CONSULT A CHARTERED PHYSIOTHERAPIST FOR A PROGRAMME OF EXERCISES THAT CAN HELP PREVENT DISCOMFORT.**



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You can be referred to a physio by your GP, or some NHS physiotherapy departments allow patients to self-refer, without having to see another healthcare practitioner. To find a local private physiotherapist visit **[www.physio2u.co.uk](http://www.physio2u.co.uk)**



To find an occupational health physiotherapist, visit the Association of Chartered Physiotherapists in Occupational Health and Ergonomics website **[www.acpohe.org.uk](http://www.acpohe.org.uk)**

***For more information***  
on how to access physiotherapy services and to download free exercise advice leaflets designed for you visit: **[www.csp.org.uk](http://www.csp.org.uk)**

THE CHARTERED SOCIETY OF PHYSIOTHERAPY is the professional, educational and trade union body for the United Kingdom's 56,000 chartered physiotherapists, physiotherapy students and support workers.