



# A Prescription for “Your BACK in the Drivers Seat”

*Courtesy of:*

- Peterborough Physiotherapy and Sports Injuries Clinic (705) 741-2284
- Chemong Physiotherapy (705) 292-9888
- Lindsay Physiotherapy (705) 324-8512
- Lindsay Rehab Health Centre (705) 324-0404

*Practicing proper posture is crucial to safety and driving comfort.*

*Those who spend a lot of time driving are at greater risk of damaging a disc.  
The following can help you reduce bodily stress and strain as it relates to driving.*



## YOUR SEAT ADJUSTMENTS AND BODY POSITIONS

**While seated, be aware of your body position. It is important to keep the curves in your back in a balanced, neutral position. If you are prone to lower back pain, support your back with a lumbar support.**

- Avoid gripping the steering wheel too tensely, as this will tire the neck, shoulder and arm muscles.
- Use your armrest to shift your weight and relieve some of the tension on your back. Making use of it can also help decrease the onset of fatigue in your neck and shoulders. While sitting in a balanced position, the armrest should support your elbows and forearms without causing a sideways lean.
- To further reduce strain on the neck, rest and relax your neck muscles against the headrest when at a stoplight.
- The headrest should be high enough to prevent your head from being thrown back should an accident occur.

## ADDITIONAL TIPS:

- Keep your wallet out of your back pocket. Sitting on bulky wallets for long periods of time can aggravate back, hip and leg discomfort.
- Avoid twisting and turning to reach for objects in the back seat. This motion may cause stress to the back, neck and shoulders. Plan ahead to avoid this.
- When possible use the cruise control feature, allowing your legs and back to relax and change position.
- Vibration can be very damaging to the spine causing weakness of discs, ligaments and muscles. Reduce vibrations by reducing speed on bumpy terrain, ensuring correct tire pressure and maintaining your vehicle (suspension etc.). In more severe cases the use of specially designed vibrating dampening cushions or the installation of air ride seats may be necessary.



### Entering Backwards



### Entering Forwards



### Exiting Backwards



### Exiting Forwards



## ENTERING YOUR VEHICLE

There are two main ways to enter your vehicle depending on its size and type.

1. Entering backwards when the seat in your vehicle is lower than your hip level.
  - Stand with your back towards the seat.
  - Support yourself with both hands and lower your bottom into the seat.
  - Once you are sitting, swing one or both legs at a time into the vehicle.
2. Enter forwards when the vehicle seat is higher than your hip level and climb into the seat.
  - Keeping three points in contact with the ground or vehicle, climb up keeping your back straight. (Three points means two hands and one foot or two feet and one hand.)
  - Bending at your hips and knees, slide into the seat.

## EXITING YOUR VEHICLE

The same technique is used for exiting as is used for entering only in the reverse order. If you enter forwards into your vehicle you will exit backwards and if you entered backward into your vehicle you will exit forwards. To make getting out of your vehicle easier, plan ahead and slide your seat back before exiting.

## LOADING AND UNLOADING OBJECTS FROM YOUR VEHICLE

The following are two proper lifting techniques used to lift objects from the back seat or trunk.

### 1. The "Single Leg Lift" (from the back seat or trunk)

-Place one knee on the seat or bumper, if it is close to your height keeping a slight bend in the other knee. Keep your back straight while bending at the knees and hips. Slide the object towards you and pull it close to your body. While lifting, make sure to look straight ahead and keep your back straight. Turn with your feet to avoid twisting. This technique can be used for getting a child in or out of their seat.

### 2. The "Power Position"

- Keeping both feet on the ground, get as close to the vehicle as possible. Stand with your feet shoulder width apart. Bend your hips and your knees while keeping the normal c-curve in your lower back, stick your bottom out and lean forward. Hold the object close to your body, look straight ahead and return to a standing position.

### Single Leg Lift



### Power Position



## STRETCHING ON THE ROAD (INSIDE AND OUTSIDE OF YOUR VEHICLE)

When stopped on the road, take advantage of this time by doing some simple stretches, relaxation techniques or simply just change your seating position. Travelling long distances can lead to extra tension in the neck, back and shoulders. Be sure to make frequent stops to stretch.



### CHIN TUCK

Stretch the top of your head upwards, pull chin back, hold/relax. Repeat.



### SHOULDER CIRCLES

In a circular fashion, roll the shoulders slowly backwards. Repeat. Try doing a few sets forwards as well.



### LOW BACK CURLS

Push your lower back completely into the seat, then arch your back away from the seat. Repeat.



### SHOULDER SHRUGS

Inhale, lift shoulders up towards your ears, exhale and let the shoulders relax. Repeat.



### WEIGHT SHIFTS

Shift your weight on to the right side, then the left. Repeat. Reverse sitting with weight equally distributed.



### STANDING BACK ARCH

Place hands on buttocks. Push hands into hips and slowly lean backwards. Pause keeping head up.



### HIP FLEXOR STRETCH

With one hand on vehicle for support, grasp ankle, tighten stomach and slowly bring foot to buttocks. Hold and breathe. Repeat with other leg.



### STANDING HIP STRETCH

Put foot on bumper or running board of your vehicle. Keep back knee straight and back foot pointing straight ahead. Lean forward, keeping body upright. Hold, breathe and repeat with opposite leg.



### ARM/SHOULDER STRETCH

Turn palms away from your body with hands clasped together. Stretch arms forward as you round out your back. Hold and breathe. Repeat.

For more information on driving related injuries and their prevention contact:

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