

Mind your back!

Peacehaven Chiropractic highlights some of the key culprits for backache.

Commuting - whether by train, car, bus, motorbike, cycle or foot, the daily commute can not only be an unwelcome source of stress but can also take its toll on our backs.

According to consumer research by the British Chiropractic Association, almost a third of the working nation relies on public transport and the journey is not short of stress with 50% left fighting for seats and only occasionally or rarely sitting down. One in ten commuters never gets to sit down at all and one in three commuters (32%) are currently suffering from back pain.

Our Chiropractor says:

- If you mainly stand on your commute, make sure you wear comfortable shoes and loose clothing. Stand with your feet shoulder width apart and hold onto a rail comfortably, don't over stretch
- If you do get a seat, relax when sitting into your chair, making sure you have your bottom against the seat back and your shoulder blades are touching the back-rest of the chair
- Avoid stiffness by doing shoulder shrugs, buttock clenches and foot circles

Driving - According to consumer research by the British Chiropractic Association, 25% of those questioned felt that driving was one of the factors affecting their posture.

Our Chiropractor says:

- Adjust your seat to suit you
- Set your mirrors to allow for minimal head and neck movement
- Your seatbelt should always lie across the top of your shoulder and never rub against your neck or fall onto the top of your arm
- Your feet should fall naturally onto the pedals, avoid wearing high heels and thick-soled shoes
- **Relax** - A relaxed driving position reduces stress on the spine, allowing your seat to take your weight
- **Take regular breaks** - The BCA advises that you should stop and stretch your legs (and arms!) at least every two hours, more often if possible. You should certainly stop more frequently if you are feeling any discomfort
- **Clench your cheeks** - If you are stuck in traffic, exercise in your seat. Try buttock clenches, side bends, seat braces (pushing your hands into the steering wheel and your back into the seat – tensing and relaxing) as well as shoulder shrugs and circles
- **Leave the tight clothes at home** - They will restrict your movement
- **It's all in the timing** - Allow plenty of time for journeys to avoid stress

Bed rest – We come in different weights, shapes and sizes, but have one thing in common; we spend more than a third of our lives in bed, so should choose our beds carefully.

Choosing the right bed can minimise those factors that may lead to, or aggravate back pain. Research by the British Chiropractic Association in 2011 showed that of those experiencing back pain, 41% of women and 36% of men said that their pain could be brought on by a night's so-called 'rest'.

Our Chiropractor says:

- The best mattress is a supportive one
- When lying on the bed parallel your spine should not sag or bow
- Your neck should be a continuation of the straight spine and not too high or too low
- If you can feel the springs, your mattress is more than 10 years old, you and your partner aren't getting a good night's sleep then it could be time for a new mattress

Bags – Large handbags may be a fashion statement but they can pose a risk to posture and cause back problems. Large bags can weigh up to 3kgs before anything gets put in it and this only gets worse as you load it up. Heavy big bags can cause neck and shoulder strain as well as the long-term affects on posture.

Our Chiropractor says:

- **Keep it light**, especially if you have to carry it around all day
- The ideal bag for your laptop is a rucksack
- Remember to **keep your shoulders relaxed**
- Avoid holding a bag with long straps high up in the crook of your arm or down towards your knees as this will put an uneven load on your body
- If you have a 'shopping' style bag it is better to carry two bags, one in each hand to **distribute the weight more evenly**. Remember this when you are carrying your shopping as well

Carpal tunnel syndrome - assembly workers, keyboard operators, computer gamers, check-out staff and many others, receive micro traumas to their hands and wrists. Vibration and repetitive motions, when combined with spinal problems and other joint dysfunction, can result in a condition known as carpal tunnel syndrome.

The median nerve is the major nerve controlling the thumb, index and part of the middle finger. From the tip of your fingers, it travels through the bones in your wrist, past your elbow, up your arm, through your shoulder and neck, and finally to your spinal cord. Problems can develop in one or more of these areas.

The median nerve connects to the spinal cord through openings between bones in the lower neck. When these spinal bones lose their normal motion or position, they can cause problems in the fingers and wrist.

After a thorough examination, our Chiropractor at Peacehaven Chiropractic will perform specific adjustments where needed to help normalise structure and reduce nerve irritation. Chiropractic care has produced excellent results with carpal tunnel problems - without drugs or surgery. Our Chiropractor treats many local people, he also has clients who visit him from Seaford, Newhaven, Saltdean, Brighton and further.