



Mind Your Posture: Commuting

Don't let the daily grind wear you down

Hundreds and thousands of us do it each week, whether by train, car, bus, motorbike, cycle or foot and 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

So add stress, lack of comfort and lack of seats together and it's a potential posture nightmare but standing tall could be the best way to travel; our increasingly sedentary lifestyles mean we spend most of our working day sitting down, so actually standing (as long as it is comfortably) is a good way to start and end the day.

- 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.

In the BCA survey, driving came out top as the most common method of commuting, with over half of working Brits (55%) using a car to get to and from work.

Commuting by car may be seen, by some, like the easy route, but driving remains a key trigger of back pain, contributing significantly to the length of time spent sitting inactive each day at both work and home. Sitting down can put twice as much pressure on the spine as standing up.

- If driving (as we are all different shapes and sizes), make sure you adjust car seats, head rests and steering wheels to meet your individual requirements. This will not only improve your comfort in the car but also your safety.

It is not just the mode of transport used for the daily commute, other factors are contributing to poor transport posture, in particular the type of bag carried and its contents. Despite rucksacks being the most suitable form of bag, if worn correctly with both straps, fashion trends continue to dominate, with 58% of people in the survey choosing a bag with one handle which essentially loads the weight onto one side of the body.

- Ideally use a rucksack, carry it on both shoulders and adjust the straps so that the bag is held close to your back.
- If using a single strap bag, buy one with a longer strap, so you can wear it close to you with the strap over one shoulder and the brief case under the other arm but keep your shoulders relaxed.
- If you use a 'wheeled' mini case, push it instead of pulling as this puts less strain on your back and make sure the handle extends long enough to prevent you from stooping.
- Check the contents of your bag each day and only carry those items you need for the day ahead – it is surprising how many people carry unnecessary weight in their bags.

Other good advice for the daily commute:

- If using a laptop, don't sit in the same position for long periods, as you are looking down onto the screen with your head unsupported. Rest the laptop on a table, not on your lap, arms should be flat and your elbows level with the desk or table you are using.
- Muscles and joints are designed for movement so, where possible, walk as it will help improve muscle tone, improve circulation and posture.

Further information about chiropractic can be obtained by logging on to www.chiropractic-uk.co.uk

For further information contact the
British Chiropractic Association on 0118 950 5950