

How to Decrease Shoulder Pain in the Car

Many of us spend a lot of time sitting in cars (driving or riding). The typical posture we see in the car is as follows:

Head forward posture

Upper back rounded

Shoulders internally rotated

Shoulders forward.

Low back rounded.



When you adopt this type of posture you are limiting the range of motion of your shoulders. Compare slumped sitting (lift and move arms forward) and make note of the range of motion. Sit up as straight as possible, (lift and move the arm forward again) and compare it to the previous movement. You will note your shoulder motion decreases with poor posture.



When the movement of the shoulder is impeded by poor posture, you are more likely to impinge the shoulder tendons. Repeated impingements can cause the tendon to gradually wear and break down. It eventually could result in a partial or full tear.

By making adjustments in your car, one can make it easier to correct common posture mistakes and reduce or eliminate stress on your shoulders.

Foam Back Supports

We believe it is important in your car to use some type of back support to help avoid the “C” position and to obtain a good sitting posture.



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 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 you are a thinner person with less pronounced curves, you may want to try a thinner support. Either way let comfort be your guide. Some cars have an adjustable lumbar roll built into the car seat. Check to see if your car has such a support.

Before you purchase a foam or air filled 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. Through experimentation you can determine an appropriate thickness for your support.



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 (also known as "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 shoulders, arms, neck, and back 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 maneuver places great stress on your shoulder.