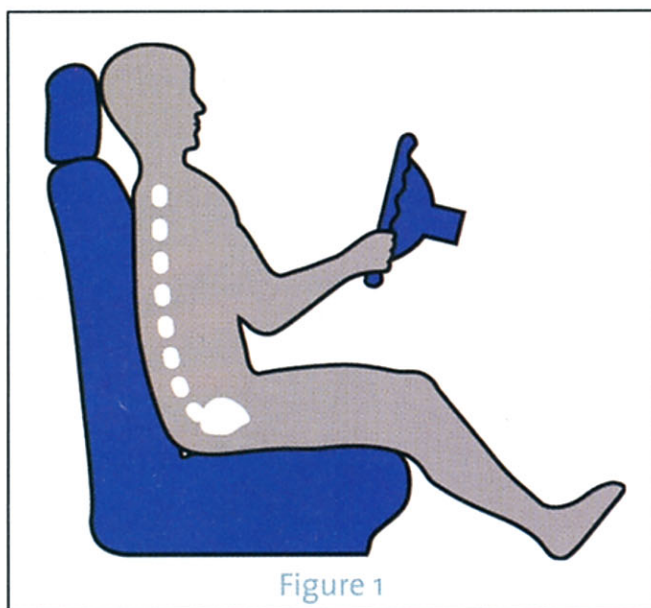


Back care and commuting

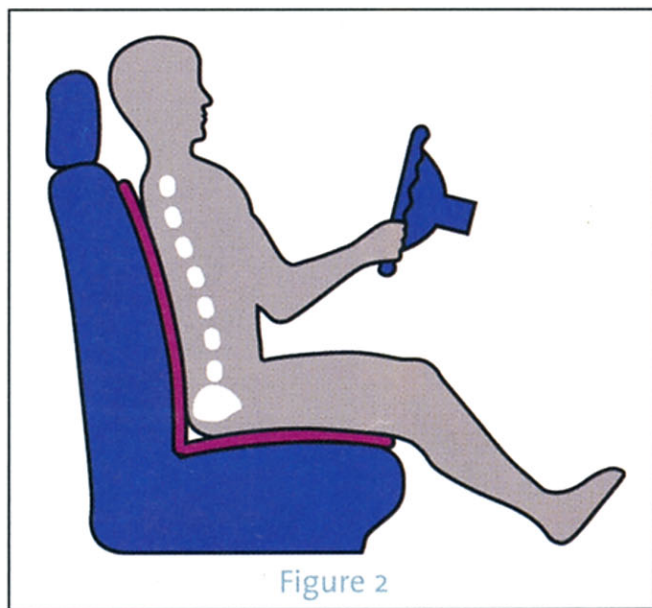
According to the U.S. Census Bureau, almost 10 million people now drive an hour or longer to work every day. With the average daily commute now at 25 minutes and cities such as Los Angeles reporting traffic congestion pushing some commutes to 90 minutes or more, proper posture in the car while driving—and sitting in traffic—is critical to preventing low back pain.



Vance said car seats often cause the spine to bend incorrectly (Figure 1). With your knees typically higher than your hips, the average car seat often strains your hips and lower back. Though multi-position seats are common in many cars today, they still don't take into account individual torso heights. The best option is to seek out a quality back support and seat cushion to ensure that the spine remains in the correct position (Figure 2).

The potential for low back pain occurs in any improper seated position.

"Whether it's in a car, on an airplane, or even in bed, proper spine support is critical," said April Vance, PT, an ergonomics specialist in Nashville, TN. "For example, if you frequently take long trips in a car, you're more likely to be uncomfortable or experience pain without proper back support."



"People can seek medical treatment and complete extensive rehabilitation to treat low back pain," Vance said, "but the reality is that lifestyle changes also can help to decrease the potential for recurrence of back pain if proper support is maintained throughout daily activities."

Asking when and where pain occurs is a good barometer to figuring out whether lifestyle changes and proper back supports can alleviate low back pain.

Courtesy of Relax the Back and Sacro-Ease.