

DRIVING CAN BE SUCH A PAIN!

There are many causes of back pain. However, prolonged sitting is one of the most common causes and a recent survey commissioned by the British Osteopathic Association showed that, in our area, this was the cause of over 40% of all back pain. When you consider that the same survey showed that more than 8 out of 10 people have suffered back pain at some stage, this is a major concern.

Many of us spend a great deal of time sitting in our cars – especially people who drive long distances for a living, such as taxi-drivers, bus-drivers and sales-people. Sometimes, the design of the car itself can lead to problems – and not just back pain, but neck-ache, headaches, shoulder, elbow or wrist pain, and hip, knee or foot pain!

These problems are usually the result of a twisted or slumped seating position. In general prevention is better than cure, and there are 3 simple tests you can use when buying a car to determine whether the layout is suitable for you.

1. *The Praying Test:* Place both hands together, pointing forwards. The steering wheel should not be offset to one side.
2. *The Fist Test:* With the seat in the normal position, make a fist with your left hand. There should be enough room between the top of your head and the roof of the car to place your fist.
3. *The Look Down Test:* With both hands on the steering wheel, look down at your legs. It should be possible to see equal amounts of both legs between your arms.

When you are driving, keep your seat reasonably upright, leaning backwards at only a slight angle. Keep the headrest adjusted so that the centre of the headrest is level with your eyes. Don't set it too low, as this can allow more serious injury in an accident. Adjust the seat so that you can sit with your arms gently bent at the wheel without leaning forward out of the seat. Drive with a relaxed posture – you can relax by raising your shoulders towards your ears as you breathe in, and then lowering them as you breathe out; make your out-breath longer than your in-breath. You may want to do this when sitting at a red light or waiting at a major junction.

Osteopaths can advise on posture, and treat the aches and pains caused by long-distance driving. If you are unlucky enough to be involved in a road accident, osteopathy can help relieve the pain of injury, especially whiplash type injuries.

Osteopathic healthcare is available from registered osteopaths Stephen Hudson and Caroline Sampson at:

**The Ashfield Practice, 22 Ashfield Road,
Chippenham. Tel. 01249 659749
www.wiltsosteopaths.co.uk.**