

Osteopathy and Driving

Whether driving a car, a bus, or a lorry or even as a passenger you could be suffering from driving related back pain.

In all these cases osteopathy can help to reduce pain and your practitioner can offer advice on back pain management, including simple exercises, to prevent problems in the future.

Driving can give you...

Neck Pain
Headaches
Eyestrain
Shoulder Pain
Wrist Pain
Elbow Pain
Back Pain
Bottom Ache
Hip Pain
Knee Pain
Foot and Ankle Pain

Is the car the right fit for you?

Sometimes, the design of the car itself can lead to back problems. If you have to drive particularly long distances, check out the cabin and layout of the controls with these four tests. If the car can pass these four simple tests then there is a good chance that it is suitable for the particular driver. By using these tests, a prospective buyer can make an informed choice of car and hopefully avoid 'driver's back pain'.

1. The Praying Test - The driver places both hands together, pointing forwards. If the steering wheel is not offset then the driver should be pointing straight at the centre of the wheel. The danger of having an offset wheel is that most drivers tend to rotate the middle of the spine to compensate for its position, producing long term back strain.

2. The Fist Test - With the seat in the normal driving position make a fist with left hand keeping the thumb to the side of the index finger. It should be possible to insert the fist on the crown of the head. If it is only just possible to insert the flat of the hand between the roof and the head then there is insufficient headroom. The danger of having too little headroom is that the driver may compensate for the lack of height by slouching in the seat which puts a strain on the spine and thighs.

3. The Look Down Test - With both hands placed evenly on the steering wheel look down at the legs. It should be possible to see equal amounts of both legs between the arms. Frequently the left leg will be visible but the right leg will be obscured by the right arm which may indicate that the shoulder girdle

is rotated to the left in relation to the pelvis.

4. The Right Leg Test - This test should be performed after driving the car for a short while. Once again, look down and examine the position of the right leg. Is it elevated above the level of the left or has it fallen out towards the edge of the seat? Is the right foot roughly in line with the thigh as it should be, or has it had to come across towards the centre of the car?

When Driving

Car seats can be adjusted to suit your posture but make sure that you always:

1. Keep your seat reasonably upright, leaning backwards only at a slight angle, about 15 degrees.

2. Keep the headrest adjusted so that the centre of the headrest is level with your eyes. Don't set the headrest too low as this can allow more serious injury in an accident.

3. When getting in, sit first then swing your legs into the car. When you get out, move the seat back before swinging your legs out.

4. Do you 'ride the clutch', resting your foot in the air? No wonder your ankles or calf muscles hurt.

5. To relax, raise your shoulders to your ears breathing in, then lower them as you breathe out. You may want to do this at every red traffic light, or major junction.

6. Avoid reaching behind to get bags from the rear seat. Don't be lazy. Get out and open the door.

7. Be careful when loading and unloading. Lift correctly.

8. Avoid lifting unnecessary weights. Get help to

change a tyre.

9. Sit with arms gently bent at the elbow to the wheel and don't lean forward out of the seat.

10. Wear a seat belt and make sure it is properly adjusted. Make sure children also have appropriate seat belts and cushions.

Remember

Prevention is better than cure

Sit properly and drive relaxed

Osteopaths can advise on posture

Osteopaths treat neck and back pain and a great many other complaints as well

If you are unlucky enough to be involved in a road accident, osteopathy can help

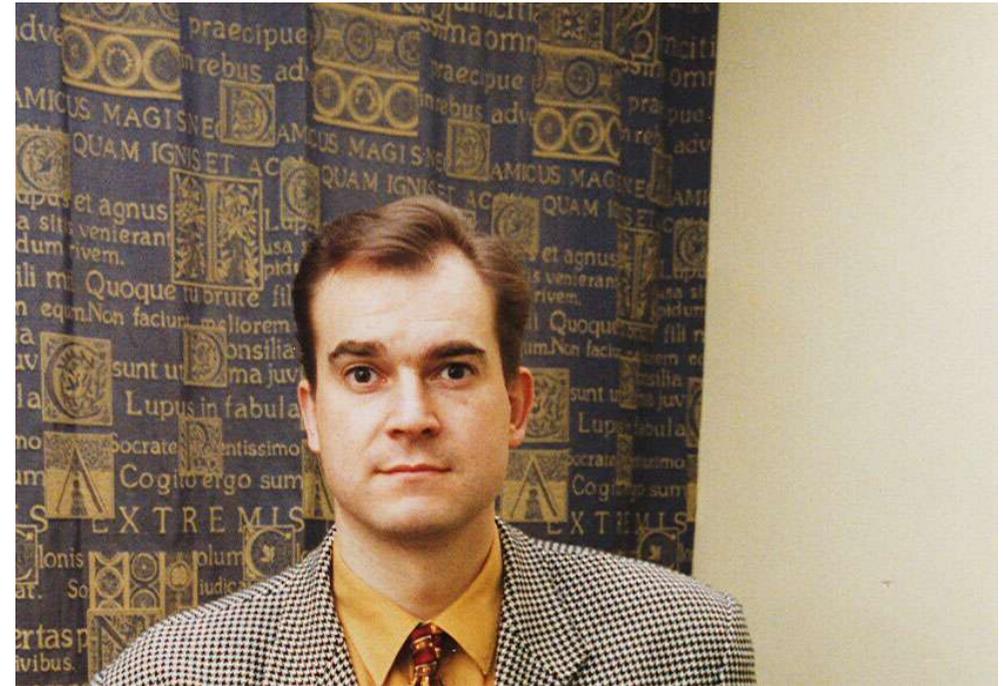
Osteopathy And Patient Protection

Osteopaths are trained to recognise and treat many causes of pain. Osteopathy is an established system of diagnosis and manual treatment, which is recognised by the British Medical Association as a discrete clinical discipline.

For the last sixty years, osteopaths have worked within a system of voluntary regulation that set standards of training and practice. In 1993, osteopathy became the first major complementary health care profession to be accorded statutory recognition under the 1993 Osteopaths Act. This has culminated in the opening of the statutory register of osteopaths by the General Osteopathic Council in May 1998. Only those practitioners able to show that they have been in safe and competent practice of osteopathy will be allowed onto the register and in the future all osteopaths will be trained to the same high rigorous standards.

All osteopaths have to have medical malpractice insurance and to follow a strict code of conduct.

Patients have the same safeguards as when currently they consult a doctor or dentist.



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Osteopath and Naturopath

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Robert is an osteopath and naturopath, he graduated from the British College of Naturopathy and Osteopathy in 1991. Since then he has worked in a busy practice in Huddersfield for 5 years, before moving to Scotland in 1996 to set up the Good Health Centre.

He has contributed to two international textbooks on back pain as well as winning the National Back Pain Association gold medal for original research. Robert has also written a number of magazine articles and newsletters on nutrition and herbal medicine.

As a member of the Spinal Research Unit of Huddersfield University, Robert has been

involved in some of the latest research into back pain, the results of which have been published in peer reviewed scientific journals such as Spine.

Three years ago Robert completed a course on myo-facial acupuncture, for the treatment of musculo-skeletal injuries, which he has found to be a very useful adjunct to his osteopathic skills.