

Driving posture and head restraint adjustment:

Are you sitting comfortably in your car or van?

Probably not, but let's begin anyway. The scale of back pain suffering in the UK is massive, with one in six working days lost due to the condition. Factor that number out across every worker in the country and the cost to UK plc is 4.9 million working days lost per year, according to figures from the Health and Safety Executive.

Generally back pain is associated with lifting or moving things whilst using poor lifting techniques and poor body postures but there has been a rapid rise in drivers suffering from back, neck or shoulder pain exacerbated by hours spent at the wheel in poorly-adjusted seats, or not sitting correctly in seats, common faults include not sitting back squarely in the seat and slumped shoulders and chest.



Correct: the shoulder blades are touching the back of the seat, the chest is upright and the bottom is tucked into the back of the seat. Also a better distance from the wheel

Incorrect: the shoulders and chest are slumped and the driver's bottom is not tucked into the back of the seat. The driver is also too close to the steering wheel



Posture tips

- The lower chest should come forward and up in order to relax the shoulder blades back and down
- Shoulder blades should be in good contact with the back of the seat. The lower spine should not push into the back support.
- The back of the head should be one finger's thickness away from the headrest
- Hands should be in the 'ten-to-two' position
- The steering wheel should be directly in front of the driver and the driver's wrist should be able to rest on top of the wheel
- Avoid headrests which push the head forward
- Choose a car without a lip at the back of the boot so equipment doesn't have to be lifted over it
- Drivers should not twist round to grab something from the back seat – stop and get out of the car
- If drivers have a laptop or anything heavy on the passenger seat they should not haul it over to them: they should go round to the passenger door to get it
- Men should not keep a wallet in the back pocket when driving as this creates a twist the pelvis and can cause severe pain over time
- Try not to sit too close to the steering wheel, a common fault with small people, as the airbag may not have sufficient space to fully deploy before contacting the driver. The force of a deploying airbag can cause serious injury (Source: Ecom People Engineers)

For further details

- www.etcom.co.uk or
- www.hse.gov.uk/betterbacks

Head Restraint Adjustment

Vehicle head restraints are designed to limit the movement of the head and provide support in an accident. A properly adjusted head restraint will help to protect you against whiplash, and potentially save you from a long-term injury. So, always ensure your head restraint is adjusted properly, as either a driver or a passenger.

In order to correctly adjust a head restraint you should –

- Ensure that the top of the head restraint is as high as the top of your head
- Position the head restraint as close to the rear of your head as possible

A properly adjusted head restraint will help prevent whiplash by reducing the distance between the back of the head and head restraint, stopping the neck from bending back. It will also reduce the amount of time it takes your head to


initially contact the head restraint, and increase the amount of time that your head is supported during an accident. One finger thickness between the back of the head and the restraint is a good guideline.


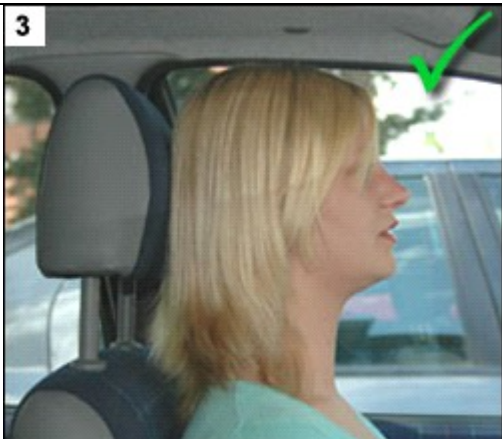
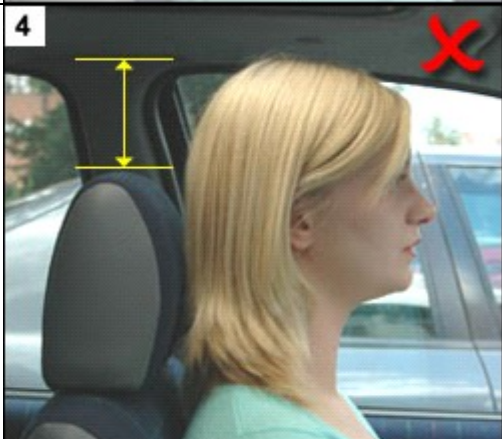
Having a locking head restraint is important. A head restraint that cannot be locked in position may move during an accident. This can compromise the amount of protection the restraint offers. There is also the danger that rear seat occupants getting in and out of the vehicle could accidentally move the restraint out of position. When buying a car - especially second hand vehicles - it is important to ensure that the head restraint can be properly adjusted so that it rests behind your head.

Examples of Head Restraint Use

The pictures below show properly and poorly adjusted head restraints.

Picture 1 shows an example of a well adjusted head restraint, and picture 2 shows the same restraint positioned too far away from the back of the head. Pictures 3 and 4 give a comparison between a well adjusted head restraint and a head restraint that is positioned too low. In the real world, many people have poorly adjusted head restraints that are both too low, and too far back from their head.

<p>1</p>  <p>A well adjusted head restraint</p>	<p>This picture shows a well-adjusted head restraint, which will reduce the risk of suffering a whiplash injury.</p> <p>The seat back angle is relatively upright, and this allows the head restraint to be positioned close to the back of the head.</p> <p>The top of the head restraint is level with the top of the occupant's head, which will also help to prevent injury.</p>
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<p>2</p>  <p>A poorly adjusted head restraint</p>	<p>This picture shows a poorly adjusted head restraint.</p> <p>Even though the top of the head restraint is level with the top of the occupant's head, a large gap exists between the back of the occupant's head and the head restraint.</p> <p>This gap - which is marked using the yellow arrow - means that the head can move and tilt further back, increasing the risk of injury.</p>
<p>3</p>  <p>A well adjusted head restraint</p>	<p>This picture shows another example of a properly adjusted head restraint.</p> <p>As in Picture 1, the two main points to note are that the head restraint is as high as the top of the occupant's head, and the restraint is close to the back of the head.</p>
<p>4</p>  <p>A poorly adjusted head restraint</p>	<p>This picture is an example of a poorly adjusted head restraint.</p> <p>The yellow arrow shows the distance between the top of the occupant's head and the top of the head restraint, which would increase the risk of an injury.</p> <p>The head restraint should be moved higher in order to adjust it correctly, as shown in picture 3.</p>

Source: ROSPA, for further details visit <http://www.rospa.com/roadsafety/index.htm>