

How to Avoid Getting Stiff on a Long Car Trip



Sitting in a car for hours compresses muscles and keeps your spine unnaturally immobile. **The most important rule is to stop every hour, get out and walk around for several minutes.** This helps prevent stiffness, but more importantly, lessens your risk of developing a **deep venous thrombosis (DVT)**, or blood clot in the leg. A blood clot can travel to your brain, lungs or heart and is potentially fatal.

The following are more ways to stay comfortable:

- **Try a horseshoe-shaped travel pillow to support your neck.** Use a lumbar support pillow (or rolled towel) between your lower back and the back of the seat every other half-hour. A beaded seat cushion may also feel good.
- **As a passenger, occasionally vary your leg position to improve circulation and avoid leg cramps.** Alternate placing your feet on the floor with elevating them on a small stack of books tied together or secured with a rubber band, or on a bag of similar size.
- **When driving, do not hold the steering wheel too tightly.** Shift between holding it firmly and a little more loosely, to improve circulation and lessen fatigue in your hands, arms and wrists.
- **In or out of the car, regularly raise your feet and toes and then point them up and down several times.** Also, alternately move each ankle and foot in small circles, 10 times clockwise, then 10 times counterclockwise. To make the effect stronger, do the exercise with both feet simultaneously.
- **During each rest stop, carefully roll your shoulders forward and back several times to stretch them.**
- **If your doctor agrees, consider taking a preventive dose of acetaminophen or a nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID) to relieve the discomfort of any stiffness that might develop.**

Pain from sitting in a car for long periods can ruin your vacation or workday. If pain persists, see us to determine specific exercises to help you feel better.