

# 10 Ergonomics Safety Tips for Workers Who Drive a Lot on the Job



When thinking of the activities that could expose workers to the risk of developing musculoskeletal injuries (MSIs), driving may not come to mind. But if workers frequently drive for long periods of time on the job, they could develop neck, back and shoulder pain, cramps, pressure points and poor circulation in their legs and buttocks.

According to a handout from Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers, workers such as truck drivers, ambulance drivers, heavy equipment operators, delivery personnel and traveling salesmen are at risk of developing chronic back and neck injuries from driving primarily due to:

- Sitting for long periods of time
- Whole-body vibration.

Here are 10 safety tips to give any worker who drives for long periods of time on a regular basis:

1. If possible, the back of your seat should be tilted at 110° from your legs to reduce disc pressure and relax the back muscles.
2. Keep your suspension system in good working order. You may also want to add extra padding over your seat to absorb vibration.
3. Adjust your seat and steering wheel properly. Make sure you can press the pedals without moving your lower back forward off the back of the seat.
4. Use a lumbar support. Even a properly-placed rolled-up towel will suffice.
5. If possible, tilt your seat a notch or two back and forth every 20-30 minutes, which alters the direction of vibration on your body.
6. Avoid slouching. Don't adjust your rear or side view mirrors unless you've changed the tilt in your seat.
7. Take regular rest/stretch breaks. Just 5 minutes per hour will suffice.
8. Within reasonable limits, shift positions regularly while driving.
9. People who work in driving occupations are often inactive and could gain weight. Because being overweight increases the chance of injuring your lower back, find active forms of recreation to keep fit in your personal

time.

10. Avoid lifting immediately after driving. Your muscles are tired, your ligaments are stretched and the discs in your spine are at risk of injury. So give yourself one or two minutes to stretch and rest before trying to lift anything.

For more on ergonomics in the workplace, visit the OHS Insider's Ergonomics Compliance Centre, which contains information, tools and other resources such as:

- Ergonomics risk factor checklist
- Model Worker MSI Symptoms Survey
- How to justify investing in ergonomics
- How to identify and assess ergonomics-related hazards
- 7 strategies for making your ergonomics program a success.

And because driving in the winter poses additional hazards, here are 10 safe winter driving tips.