

Healthy Living

Information from the American Chiropractic Association & Dr. Joel Fugleberg

Ergonomics for Truck Drivers

Whether it's long-haul transport or local beverage delivery, truck driving is one of the hardest jobs on the body. Not only are the long hours of sitting hard on truck drivers' backs, but so are all their other tasks. It is easy to overlook the heavy toll that securing loads, stacking hand trucks, or handling freight can have on the body. In fact, truck driving is always at or near the top of OSHA's list of professions for lost work due to injury. The good news is that there are several things you can do to lessen the risk of injury.

Tips for Driving

- Vary your seat position slightly every 30 to 60 minutes to vary the stress on your body.
- Change hand position on the steering wheel often. Do not squeeze harder than necessary.
- Use a steering wheel cover to protect your hands from a cold wheel.
- Use a gel seat cushion if the truck vibrates too much.

Adjust the Seat

- Knees should not be higher than the hips.
- The front of the seat should not contact the back of the knee. Such contact will cause drivers to slide forward into a rounded posture.
- You should be able to depress pedals all the way without twisting the back or moving away from the seat.
- If possible, adjust the lumbar area of the seat to provide gentle support. A towel or lumbar roll may be added to support the low back, if needed.



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- Slightly recline the back so the angle between the back and legs is approximately 110 degrees. Shift the body often, but stay close to this position.
- Position the steering wheel to keep elbows as close to the sides as possible, minimizing reach.
- Be sure instrumentation is easy to see.
- Adjust mirrors so you can see all of them without slouching or twisting. Use the mirrors as a cue to sit up when you slouch, instead of readjusting them.

Out-of-Truck Tips

- Do not go directly from prolonged sitting to lifting and carrying tasks. Give your back a few minutes to adjust by completing other

tasks such as paperwork or talking with the client.

- Never twist your back. When entering and exiting the truck, turn your body first before stepping up or down. When carrying objects, turn with your feet instead of twisting the spine.
- Moving from a warm truck into cold outside temperatures can cause muscles to stiffen. This puts truck drivers more at risk for injury when lifting objects. Keep a vest or jacket close by and use it.
- Gloves protect the hands from the cold and reduce the risk of developing carpal tunnel syndrome.
- Stand up and move to a different position to do paperwork or other tasks.

General Tips

- Stay hydrated and try to maintain proper nutrition. Your body can't function and heal without the right tools.
- Stay in shape. Frequent stretching is important. Exercise that gets your heart working and keeps the muscles you don't use at work strong are essential to continued health. Your doctor of chiropractic can help design a program that is realistic for you.

Chiropractic for Drivers

If you experience any symptoms such as back ache or pain in the wrists, shoulder, hip, knee, or neck, consult your doctor of chiropractic. In addition to helping you examine your ergonomic risk factors, your doctor of chiropractic can help you alleviate the symptoms with hands-on treatment, dietary changes, and other techniques that do not require medication.

When choosing a doctor of chiropractic:

- Be sure your doctor of chiropractic (DC) has attended an accredited chiropractic college.
- Make sure the DC is licensed to practice in your state. After graduating from an accredited chiropractic college, doctors of chiropractic must pass rigorous state and national board exams before they can practice.
- Talk to your friends, family, and co-workers. The best referrals often come from satisfied patients.
- Talk to the doctor. The DC should be willing to answer your questions and should talk freely with you about your concerns and course of treatment.

Spinal manipulation and other chiropractic techniques have been proven to be safe and effective methods to decrease pain and related symptoms. ■



Dr. Joel Fugleberg is a chiropractor, fitness advocate, author, and health & wellness speaker in St. Paul, MN. His mission is to empower others to take a proactive approach in their health, through the use of chiropractic and other natural strategies, to achieve optimal function and wellness. With his background, he has helped thousands reach a higher level of health in his community.

If you would like to schedule a consultation, or to have Dr. Joel speak at your organization or event, he can be reached at the contact info listed below.

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