

It's the Holidays: Top tips for travelling this Summer

With school holidays already having started in July for many, families across the country are planning their big summer getaway abroad or on home turf. Either way, it can be hard to stay healthy when on holiday as it's often seen as a time of indulgence, but have you ever considered the impact a holiday can have on your back health?

According to consumer research from the British Chiropractic Association (BCA) in 2016, almost one third (32%) of people who have suffered from back or neck pain said they have experienced this pain on holiday.

As for the cause of pain, 45% of those suffering on holiday said that sleeping in a different bed was the cause of their pain, whilst 40% blamed traveling long distances, and 37% stated it was down to carrying heavy bags.

Interestingly, traveling long distances was a more common cause of pain for women, with 44% of women saying this was the reason for their holiday pain, compared to 34% of men.

The BCA has developed these top tips to help make sure your break isn't ruined by pain.



Get a good night's sleep

Traveling when tired increases your chances of injury, so make sure you sleep well the night before a long journey and avoid rushing around.

Push, don't pull!

Many wheeled cases encourage you to pull the case handle from behind, but this makes the upper body/back twist. If possible, push the case in front of you or use a trolley making sure you choose one from the stack which does not have 'wonky wheels', as keeping it on track will not do your back any good!

Take regular breaks

stop and stretch your legs (and arms!) at least every two hours, more often if possible. You should certainly stop more frequently if you are feeling any discomfort.

Bed down

When you get to your hotel, if your bed is too hard ask the hotel staff for a spare duvet or blanket to put between you and the mattress. Firm beds are not always best, but it is easier to soften a hard bed than make a soft bed harder. The same with pillows.

Pillow check

Check the pillow(s) on your bed allow your head to stay in alignment with rest of your body and mould to the shape of your head and neck. Ask to change pillows if you are not happy. Many people take their own pillow away with them.

Suitcase selection

Choose wisely and buy the lightest case possible with wheels; (hard cases tend to weigh quite a lot before you even start to fill them).

Air-exercise

You will be restricted to your seat for most of the flight, but avoid stiffness by doing shoulder shrugs, buttock clenches and foot circles. Take the opportunity to get up and stretch your legs whenever you can.

Avoid 'travelators'

Get your joints moving quickly after a flight and walk to arrivals rather than the easy option of a moving walkway.

Clench!

If you are stuck in traffic, exercise in your seat. Try buttock clenches, side bends, seat braces (pushing your hands into the steering wheel and your back into the seat - tensing and relaxing) as well as shoulder shrugs and circles.

Keep moving

Stand up and move around every twenty to thirty minutes; just stretch and shake out your limbs, to allow your muscles to relax. Using something like the Straighten Up UK exercises would be ideal. You can combine this with fresh applications of sun cream or taking a drink of water.

If you do have an episode...a little ice on the back and a little ice in the drink always helps...happy holidays!

Two cases are better than one

If possible, take two light suitcases rather than one, so you can distribute the weight more evenly. If using soft bags, make sure they have a long shoulder strap as this will enable you to wear the bag across your body and more evenly distribute the weight of the

Make adjustment

Many back problems are caused or aggravated by poor driving posture. If you're driving to your holiday destination, ensure the seat position is slightly backwards so that it feels natural and that your elbows are at a comfortable and relaxed angle.

Relax at the wheel

as this reduces stress on the spine and allows your seat to take your weight.

Bigger is better

If you hire a car, go for the largest one you can afford, generally the larger car, the more comfy and less cramped it will be.

Shield your eyes

wearing sunglasses or a cap/hat may make you look cool but, more seriously, they keep your eyes more relaxed and can help to keep you from squinting and therefore keep your neck muscles more relaxed.

See the sights on foot

If you opt for a sightseeing tour in a car or coach just be aware that sitting looking out of a window driving down bumpy roads will aggravate your neck, so don't spend too long with your neck in an awkward position.