

# The Wellness Express™

Jump on the train to good health

Issue 1, May, 2014

## Don't Let Travel be a Pain in your Neck (or Back)

Presented by: **Total Health Systems**

**TotalHealthSystems.com**

### Introduction

Whether traveling for work or for pleasure, alone or with your family, traveling by car or plane can leave you tired, stiff, sore and even stressed.

We were never designed to spend large amounts of time sitting. Even traveling in the most comfortable car or opting to fly first class won't eliminate the abnormal pressures and forces from prolonged sitting positions that can result in restricted blood flow and to abnormal stress on your body joints. Prolonged driving can be hard on your neck and shoulders, in addition to being hard on your low back and legs. Long flight times may also leave you with tension or soreness in your neck and shoulders in addition to giving you back and leg stiffness and soreness or vascular issues.

### Traveling by Car?

- Get adjusted before you leave. A well-adjusted spine will handle the stress of travel better.
- Position the driver's seat to be as close to the steering wheel as

comfortably possible. The seat should have you positioned so that your knees are slightly higher than your hips. Position the steering wheel so your shoulders are relaxed and down while your hands are on the wheel.



- Minimize arm and hand tension while driving by hold the steering wheel at approximately 3 o'clock and 7 o'clock and periodically switching to 10 o'clock and 5 o'clock.
- Tighten and loosen your grip on the steering wheel to improve hand circulation and decrease muscle fatigue in the arms, wrists and hands.
- Consider using a back support or roll a towel to put in the small of your back to reduce the risk of low-back strain, pain or injury. Alternating the back support with

### Exercise of the Week

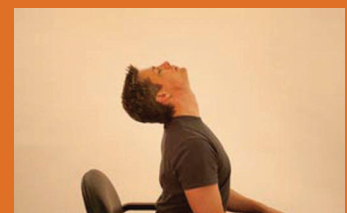
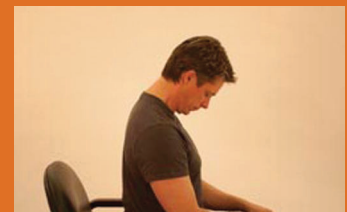
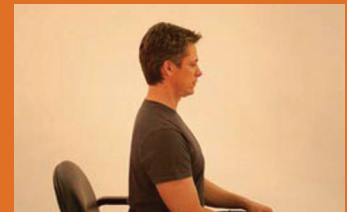
**Exercise 1 – Range of Motion: Flexion/Extension**

**Difficulty: Easy**

*(Consult your chiropractor before doing this or any other exercise.)*

**Start:** Sit upright in chair.

**Exercise:** Bring chin down toward chest. Stop at point you feel resistance to movement, but no pain. Hold for 10-15 seconds. Then, move head back as far as it will go, bringing chin up toward ceiling. Stop when you feel resistance, but no pain. Try not to compress back of neck when you do this. Hold for 10-15 seconds. Repeat 5-10X.



Presented by: 43740 Garfield Road, Clinton Township (586) 228-0270  
28098 23 Mile Road, Chesterfield (586) 949-0123  
57911 Van Dyke Road, Washington (586) 781-0800



the back of the seat may be enough of a change to your position to minimize back pain.

- Exercise your legs while driving by opening your toes as wide as you can and counting to 10 while doing so, then count to 5 while contracting first your calf muscles, then your thigh muscles and finally your buttock muscles. Periodically doing these simple exercises, may help reduce the risk of leg swelling, fatigue or discomfort. You can also roll your shoulders back and forth, making sure to keep your hands on the steering wheel and your eyes on the road.

- Take breaks. Rest stops and gas stations are a great time to stop, walk, stretch. Don't underestimate the consequences of fatigue.

## Traveling by Airplane?

- Once again, get adjusted before you travel. A well-adjusted spine will handle the stress of travel better. If you are thinking of traveling and have been getting regular chiropractic care for neck or back pain, make sure your doctor of chiropractic feels you are physically ready to travel.

- Use rolled-up pillows or blankets to maintain the S curves of your spine while you are sitting on the airplane. Tuck a pillow into the small of your back and lay another pillow across the gap between your neck and the headrest. If the seat is hollowed from wear, use folded blankets to raise your buttocks a little. A travel pillow for the neck

can be a good idea if you think you might want to sleep on the plane.

- Check all bags heavier than 5-10 percent of your body weight. Overhead lifting of more than this weight should be avoided to reduce the risk of hurting your low back or neck. While lifting bags, stand right in front of the overhead compartment so the spine is not rotated don't turn or twist your head and neck in the process of putting luggage in the overhead compartment.

- When stowing belongings under the seat, sit in your seat and use your hands and feet to gently guide your bags under the seat directly in front of you.

- While seated, vary your position occasionally to improve circulation and avoid leg cramps. Massage legs and calves. Bring your legs in, and move your knees up and down. Prop your legs up on a book or a bag under your seat.

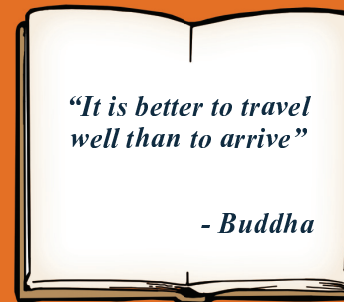
- Make sure the air controls aren't blowing on your neck and shoulder muscles as this may make them stiff or sore.

A little chiropractic before and after your trip along with these travel tips and your travel should be safe and comfortable!



**Disclaimer:** Information contained in The Wellness Express<sup>SM</sup> - Wellness Express News<sup>TM</sup> newsletter is for educational and general purposes only and is designed to assist you in making informed decisions about your health. Any information contained herein is not intended to substitute advice from your physician or other healthcare professional.

## Quote to Inspire



### True or False?

A pillow in the small of the back can reduce low back strain while driving

Answer: True

### Finish this sentence:

Massaging legs and calves while traveling may...

- A) avoid lower-back pain
- B) prevent shoulder soreness
- C) improve circulation

Answer: C) improve circulation

### Question:

Overhead baggage should not exceed what % of your body weight?

- A) 5 – 10%
- B) 1 – 5%
- C) 10 – 15%

Answer: A) 5 – 10%

Writer: Jenny Crosby, DC  
Design: Elena Zhukova  
Graphics: Maria Camille Almirañez  
Production: Mike Talarico