

Brits say commuting is a pain in the neck... and back, hips and knees

December 1 2014

One fifth (19%) of the UK's workforce say their journey to and from work is leaving them with neck, back and muscle pain.

A study from Bupa released today, found those who travel by car are most likely to be affected, with two thirds (64%) of drivers claiming their commute leaves them feeling uncomfortable – compared to 11% on the bus and 5% on the train. Cyclists and runners are among those least likely to feel any back or joint pain, with only 6% and 5% respectively saying they do. This clearly demonstrates that incorporating some physical exercise into your day can support good bone, joint and muscle health.

London commuters have it worst

Three quarters (73%) of commuters in the capital feel that their commute contributes to aches and pains and more than half (59%) claim more room would mean they suffer less.

Meanwhile, 16% of people say their commute has got more crowded over the last two years, with one in eight (12%) commuters in the UK believing if they had more space they'd suffer less joint pain.

However, of those who suffer from back and joint pain, almost half (48%) don't consider their posture when commuting and only a fifth (21%) make a conscious effort to stretch their back or legs whilst on

their journey.

Katherine Cran, Physiotherapist at Bupa's Basinghall Clinic said, "Commuting to and from work every day can have a profound effect on the body. Over time and without the right care, this can lead to long term joint and muscle damage.

"I often see people with back and [joint pain](#) who sit all day at work and tend to sit or stand throughout their commute too. Incorporating [physical exercise](#) into your day, checking your posture and doing a few simple exercises can help make a real difference."

The study also found the average worker sits or stands in the same position for three and a half hours a day, showing the lack of movement employees have during the working day.

In 2013, 31 million working days were lost due to back, neck and muscle pains – in fact, more days were lost to musculoskeletal problems than any other cause.

Katherine Cran offers advice for managing joint and [muscle pain](#) on your commute:

- Movement is medicine: try to increase the amount of physical activity you do whether its during your commute, or by incorporating it into your day – this could include cycling to work once week or walking around the block at lunchtimes;
- Drive comfortably: drivers need to make sure they sit in a comfortable position that's right for them - adjust your seat, back support and steering wheel to avoid leaning too far back or having to stretch to reach the wheel or pedals. You should also avoid placing pressure behind your knees;
- Avoid prolonged sitting: whether it's on your commute or in the

workplace, try a mixture of standing and sitting. In the office, stand while taking phone calls, or suggest standing or walking meetings to help you move more during the day; while commuting, try to adopt a range of comfortable positions - even good posture held for too long can be detrimental;

- Hop off earlier: one of the easiest ways to make a significant difference when commuting is to get off one or two stops earlier to increase your physical activity;
- Simple exercises: help keep your joints mobile and prevent stiffness by doing some simple exercises and stretches such as gently rotating your ankles, lifting your knees, extending your legs and rolling your shoulders.

Bupa UK's specialist musculoskeletal team handle over 40,000 calls a month[2]. Because early intervention is key, members suffering from MSK problems such as knee, back and hip conditions are offered fast and direct access to specialist MSK advisers, often without the need for a GP referral – helping employees to get better quickly.

More information: For more information on Bupa's musculoskeletal services visit: www.bupa.co.uk/musculosketalservices

Provided by Bupa UK

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