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# YOUR CHIROPRACTOR

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2023



**A TRUCK DRIVER'S TOLL**



**MULTIFIDUS: UNSUNG HERO**



**IS IT GOOD TO BACKBEND?**



**FUSSING OVER FERMENTED FOOD**

## RSI and how to prevent it

Are you aware of the toll repetitive tasks can have on your body? Many of us overlook this, but it's crucial to recognise the potential consequences, such as repetitive strain injury (RSI). In this article, we explore this condition and suggest ways to help prevent it.

RSI causes discomfort and pain in your muscles, nerves, and tendons due to repetitive movements and overuse. It commonly affects people engaged in repetitive activities such as: office work, assembly line tasks, construction, retail, music, and sports.

The primary cause of RSI is the overuse of a particular muscle or muscle group; especially when you also use awkward movements. Factors such as poor posture, and exerting yourself too much or when your muscles are tired, contribute to muscle fatigue and damage. This damage can trigger inflammation and swelling, leading to pain, weakness, numbness, and trouble using the affected area.

RSI commonly occurs in your upper limbs encompassing your fingers, wrists, hands, forearms, elbows, and shoulders. However, the lower limbs are also susceptible, like ankles, feet, legs, knees, and hips. Additionally, areas such as your neck and back, which are the main areas that affect our patients, are also prone to repetitive strain injuries.

This condition results in a range of common disorders, including: bursitis, carpal tunnel syndrome, golfers elbow and tennis elbow, shin splints, tenosynovitis (affecting the sheaths surrounding tendons), trigger finger, and even certain spinal issues.

### Can you prevent RSI developing?

To prevent the development of RSI here are several key measures you can take:

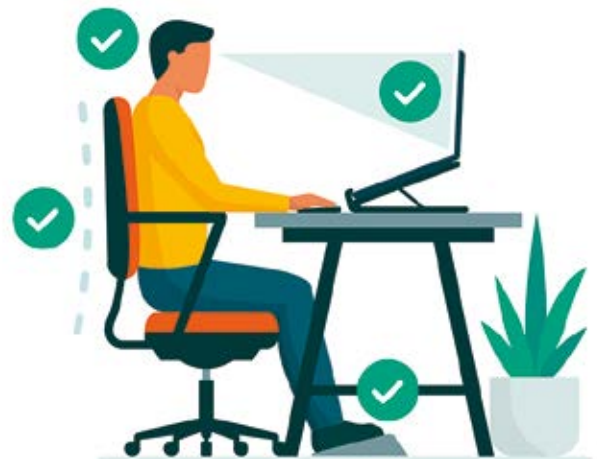
- Take regular breaks from repetitive tasks to allow your muscles and tendons time to rest and recover.
- Maintain good posture: by naturally holding your body with ease, you can reduce strain on your tissues.
- Strengthen the muscles involved in the repetitive task: fit muscles take longer to fatigue and are less prone to injury.

It is also important to prioritise good ergonomic practices; however everyone's needs are different so personalised guidance is essential. Seek expert advice to find the right solutions for you, including suitable equipment, breaks and rest periods, posture adjustments, and exercises if necessary.

RSI can cause significant and long term discomfort and disability; if you have questions about this condition, please ask us. Prevention is always better than cure.

## A quick guide to office desk setup

1. Get an adjustable chair for posture and comfort.
2. Consider a height-adjustable desk and be sure to take regular, active breaks.
3. Use an ergonomic keyboard and mouse for natural hand and wrist positions.
4. Position your monitor at eye level with the right viewing distance.
5. Don't forget to use a footrest and armrest if necessary.





## The multifidus: meet your spine's unsung hero

You have a unique muscle called the multifidus muscle, which plays an important role in the well-being of your spine. Despite its importance, most people are unfamiliar with this remarkable muscle. Taking the time to learn what its role is in your body and how to strengthen it, may improve your overall function, stability, and even ease pain.

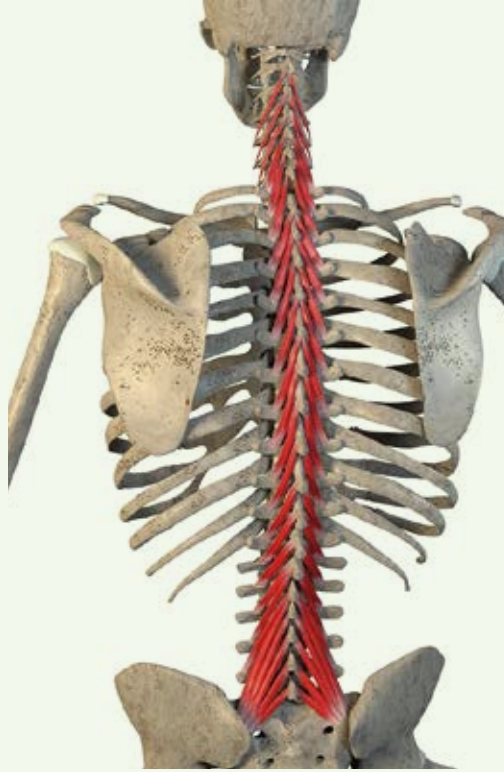
This unsung muscle hero works tirelessly to stabilise and protect your spine, while also helping in extending and rotating your back. It holds your backbone firmly and provides strength as you bend and move. By doing so, it effectively reduces pressure on your spinal discs and minimises the risk of injury.

The multifidus muscle is long and thin, consisting of many muscle bundles. Each bundle spans only a few vertebrae, but together, they connect and support most of your spine. Nestled deeply against your backbone, this muscle extends from your pelvis and tailbone to your lower back, mid-back, and neck. Due to its role, a weak multifidus can disrupt vertebral stability, particularly in your lower back.

Within your lumbar spine lies a neutral zone, which represents the range of motion that can be achieved easily from a relaxed position with minimal muscular effort. Remaining within this neutral zone requires less energy and places less stress on your spine, resulting in improved functionality,

reduced pain, and decreased disability. Just like perfectly aligned car tyres require less effort to move, the same principle applies to your spine.

The multifidus muscle works its magic by stabilising your spine without conscious effort, contracting and relaxing as needed. However, injury or weakness can occur,



making it harder to maintain a safe and neutral zone. As a result, your spine may begin to subtly 'wobble' more than usual, needing additional effort to secure it. This places increased pressure on the surrounding tissues, potentially leading to damage and dysfunction; especially if you've undergone back surgery. In fact, damage to this muscle is associated with a condition known as failed back surgery syndrome.

Fortunately, you can strengthen the multifidus through regular exercise. One example is "The Superman". To perform this exercise, lie on your stomach on the floor. Extend your arms over your head while keeping your legs straight. Maintain a neutral head position by imagining you're keeping a ball between your chin and chest. Gently contract your abdominal muscles, and slowly lift your arms and legs off the floor until you feel your lower back engage. Hold this position for two to three seconds, and then repeat ten times, twice. Stop if you feel pain.

It's important to note that the multifidus muscle is not the only muscle that supports your spine and there are a number of strengthening exercises. Talk to your chiropractor first, we can provide advice on customised exercise to ensure optimal results and prevent potential complications. Feel free to reach out to us if you have any questions or concerns.

## The ins and outs of backbends

Backbends involve arching your spine backward, creating a deep extension and opening in the front of your body. They're called "backbends" because they primarily focus on bending your spine in the opposite direction of its natural curves. With this in mind we discuss the benefits and dangers of strong back bends.

### So, are backbends of any benefit?

Backbends can increase flexibility by stretching the muscles, ligaments, and joints of the front of your body, and also improve strength, function, and posture. We spend so much time sitting and hunched forward, bending backwards reverses this position.

There may be other benefits too. In yoga practice it's believed that poses that open up your body may increase self-confidence, positive emotion, and energy.

### Are back bends safe to do?

Backbends involve moving your spine in ways that may be unfamiliar. To perform them safely requires awareness, caution, and proper technique. If you rush ahead without preparation and conditioning, you could damage your back, especially if you have existing spinal issues.

Also, backbends may not be suitable for everyone due to differences in body structure, or existing health conditions. Additionally, not being fit, strong or flexible can increase the potential risk of injury associated with deep backbends.

### Guidance for safe stretching

With that being said, let's look at some guidance to lower your risk of injuries when doing back bends of any degree.

Before you begin, warm up your body with gentle stretches and movements. Ensure your core muscles are engaged and start with slight backward bends. Listen to your body; if you're ready you can

slowly, cautiously work up to a deeper stretch. Use counter-postures like forward bends or gentle twists to balance your practice.

Keep in mind that advanced backbend postures are not necessary, you can stick with slight, gentle backward stretches. If you experience any pain or strain in your back, stop. Never force your body beyond its limits.

In summary: backbends can be safe and helpful for some people, however it's important to seek advice before beginning. We can help determine if backbends are suitable for you, what intensity of stretch is best for your body, and advise you on correct technique.



# Unveiling the hidden toll on truck drivers' spines, and the road to prevention



Truck driving is a physically demanding occupation that can take a toll on the body. Prolonged sitting, whole-body vibration, and heavy lifting can put truck drivers at a higher risk for long-term back conditions. Poor diet and lack of exercise, which can be challenging to control in this line of work, further contribute to these issues.

A 2022 study published in the journal BMC Public Health revealed that truck drivers are more prone to obesity, high blood pressure, mental health problems, and musculoskeletal disorders, including back pain. In fact, over one-third of truck drivers report experiencing back pain. Long-haul truck drivers are particularly susceptible to back pain that lasts for more than a year.

To address these challenges, effective interventions that focus on prevention and management are necessary. As chiropractors, we conduct thorough assessments of your spine in order to find the solutions best for your body. Additionally, we can offer valuable advice on diet, posture, spinal support, and exercise.

## Weight management and diet

Weight management is crucial for many truck drivers; being overweight increases the likelihood of chronic lower back pain. Dietary modifications can support healthy weight loss and help alleviate back pain. We can discuss strategies to improve food choices, especially if you're covering long distances where options may be limited.

Processed meat, high saturated fat and refined carbohydrates (all of which can be in a meat pie!), sugary foods, and a low intake of fruits and vegetables are linked to increased inflammation, which can trigger discomfort. A poor diet can result in a deficiency of essential nutrients and lead to many health problems. Supplementing with micronutrients such as omega-3 fatty acids and magnesium, for example, may provide relief.

## Posture and exercise

Proper posture is essential, particularly when sitting for extended periods. Support the natural curves of your spine, ensuring your eyes face forward, keeping shoulders relaxed, and maintain straight wrists. Furthermore, the elbows, knees, and ankles should rest at 90 degrees. The use of supportive aids can help posture, depending on the truck seat.

Improving core strength, which refers to the strength of the abdominal muscles, can also alleviate back pain. These muscles play a vital role in maintaining balance, stability, and posture – as well as facilitating various movements such as bending, twisting, and walking. We can incorporate exercises that target these muscles, to help strengthen your core.

If you're a truck driver experiencing back pain, reach out to us. There are numerous approaches, including chiropractic care, which may help reduce discomfort and improve your overall function.

The work environment of truck drivers has been described as a “healthy food desert”. Even truck drivers who have a nutritious and active lifestyle outside of work can find it difficult to keep healthy when on the road.

## CRYPTOGRAM MESSAGE

Strengthening your back and core muscles can help support your spine during every action.

**Disclaimer:** The information in this newsletter is not intended to be a substitute for professional health advice, diagnosis or treatment. Decisions relating to your health should always be made in consultation with your health care provider. Talk to your chiropractor first.



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