



New car – ask your osteopath for advice! – By Jonathan Betser

In spite of the sad demise of the Vauxhall plant in Luton, other plants such as IBC mean that vehicle production is still important in this region. It's certainly of interest to those of us who treat back sufferers! Vauxhall had invested significantly in research in order to develop good seating in their cars and vans. We therefore always considered it as a very positive fact that so many of our patients drive Vauxhalls because at least that's one factor which, generally, isn't working against their recovery!

Naturally everyone's needs from a car, in physical terms, is very individual. Someone who's very tall obviously shouldn't drive a cramped sports car (-even if he/she wants to!) and someone with a severely arthritic left knee would be better off with an automatic car. It's therefore not appropriate to describe any car as "the best" because, as with other aspects of your choice of car, your requirements are likely to be different to someone else's – whether it's your next door neighbour or Jeremy Clarkson!

So if you have, or have had a low back problem, and you've "whittled down" the choice of your next car to one out of two or three, then think about checking the following:

- Are there at least five or six centimetres between the top of your head and the car roof.
- If there's a "lumbar support" in the car, make sure it's the correct height for the curves of your own back. If not, it should be able to flatten out so you can put a cushion or seat support (-such as the "back seat") there instead.
- The base of the seat shouldn't be any longer than the distance from your bottom to your knees – you don't want to be forced into a slouching position!
- The head restraint should be fitted so it sits behind your head (-it is not a head "rest"!) and its top mustn't stop at the level of your neck as it will potentially create a dangerous pivot!
- You should be able to sit with your knees and elbows slightly bent with the seat relatively upright and you should "feel" comfortable!!

These considerations are also potentially important for anyone who's likely to be using your car regularly!

However, if you do get backache in your car remember, unless it's a really dreadful car seat, it does mean that irrespective of your car, you've almost certainly got a minor low back problem that's "grumbling" and is likely to become more severe at some stage– so don't leave it too late before you do something about it!!

The Osteopaths and Physiotherapists at Woodside clinic are always keen to help with advice about the seating position of our patients in their cars. So feel free to ask us to check yours next time you visit us!

Please visit our website for more information: www.woodsideclinic.co.uk