

Slow down when exiting your vehicle

Question: I have a large SUV and when I exit the vehicle I seem to always irritate my back. What is the best way to get out of my vehicle?

Answer: Our hunger for bigger, safer vehicles as a society has sacrificed healthy ergonomics and poor engineering in most manufacturing of seats in larger vehicles. Even when the seats are designed with spinal support in mind we have a tendency to not use them correctly. The larger vehicles have us sitting up higher and many drivers relax and slouch in their seat knowing they have a view above their traffic. Smaller vehicles breed drivers who are overly upright and forward to get a better observation point.

The correct position while seated in your vehicle is to have your back as straight as possible with support from the lower portion of the seat on your low back. Your knees should be slightly higher than your waist and your legs and feet should reach the gas and brake pedal comfortable without extending beyond 45 degrees. This means your body is fairly close to the steering wheel if you are sitting correctly. Initially this position may feel very awkward but once you get into the proper habit it will be difficult to return to your bad habits. Anyone that travels long distances in vehicles will validate the importance of proper posture while driving. If you are in the correct position while driving then getting out of your vehicle is simple. Slow down, and deliberately take your time when exiting your vehicle. We are always in such a rush and always thinking about our next activity after exiting the vehicle that we take for granted the importance of the exit at that moment. Make the exit in three separate movements. Turn off your

vehicle, take out the key and open your door without moving your legs or torso as the first step. Next, using the steering wheel or side of the seat turn your body slowly toward the open door. Lastly, step down and out of the vehicle without jumping. The more typical scenario of exiting a vehicle is to stop, turn off your engine, open the door, and swing your body to the side and out of the door all in one motion, usually jumping or hopping on to the pavement. This torques your pelvis and lower back and jolts the discs of the spine and helps keep chiropractic offices very busy. Observe yourself and others getting out of vehicles for an hour and you will wonder how people can even walk at all. Slow down, deliberately choose to make three separate movements and your spine will be much happier.

Quote of the week: *“He who graduates today, and stops learning tomorrow, is uneducated the day after.”* – Newton D. Baker