Headline: Avoid muscle soreness while traveling

Deckhead: Ergonomic travel tips could help alleviate the pain

Your back is aching. Your legs are numb. It’s a recurring problem after hours traveling by plane or motor vehicle. Getting to our destination keeps us focused and able to go that extra mile.

It doesn’t have to be so difficult. There is a way to plan for a pain-free travel experience by making small changes that can have a positive impact in how you feel once you reach your destination. The American Chiropractic Association (ACA) has suggestions.

“Prolonged sitting causes a build-up of pressure in the blood vessels in your lower legs, which causes soreness" said Scott Bautch, D.C., president of the ACA Council on Occupational Health. “Simple moves, such as stretching or contracting and relaxing your muscles, can increase blood flow.

“Treat travel like an athletic event. Warm up before getting into a car or on the plane and cool down once you reach your destination. For example, taking a short, brisk walk to stretch your hamstring and calf muscles before and after a long trip can help prevent problems.”

Consider these additional tips for healthier travels:

**Travel by car**

Sit as close to the steering wheel as comfortably possible. Do a series of muscle stretches when driving that include counting to 10 while opening your toes. Count to five while tightening your calf muscles. Follow with your thigh muscles, then gluteal muscles. Roll your shoulders forward and back, and always make sure to put safety first by keeping your hands on the steering wheel and eyes on the road.

Keep from gripping the steering wheel. Alternate tightening and loosening your grip to improve hand circulation and decrease muscle fatigue in the arms, wrists and hands.

It also helps to take breaks to move and stretch your body to refresh yourself. Never underestimate the potential consequences of fatigue.

**Travel by airplane**

Stand up straight and feel the normal “S” curve of your spine. Using rolled-up pillows or blankets to maintain that curve when you sit in your seat will prevent back pain.

When purchasing new luggage, look for sturdy, light pieces with wheels and a handle. Check all bags heavier than 5-10% of your body weight. Overhead lifting of any significant amount of weight should be avoided to reduce the risk of pain in the lower back or neck. If you use a backpack, make sure it has two padded and adjustable shoulder straps. Slinging a backpack over one shoulder does not allow weight to be distributed evenly, which could cause muscle strain.

Do not force objects with an awkward motion by using your legs, feet or arms when pushing belongings under the seat in front of you. This could cause muscle strain or spasms in the upper thighs and lower-back muscles.

Vary your positions while seated to improve circulation and avoid leg cramps. On longer trips, walk for a few minutes every hour to minimize the risk of cramps.

Cutline: PAINFUL TRIP – Flying on an airplane can lead to cramping of the muscles. It’s wise to learn ways to avoid this from happening. Image: EdNurg. Adobe Stock.