

THE SUNDAY TIMES

DRIVING

NEWS

By **Will Dron** Published **22 December 2015**



PRODUCTS: SHOFT SEATBELT DEVICE

Don't get slack: look after your back



- Rating: ★★★★★
- RRP: £24.99 (for two)
- Buy at: Shoft.co.uk

"SHOFT could be one of the most important car accessories to emerge in recent years"

The SHOFT seatbelt clip doesn't look like much. Even when you remove one from the packet (they come in pairs) it's fairly underwhelming as it amounts to not much more than a bit of rubber that slides over the seatbelt buckle. And yet, the SHOFT could be one of the most important car accessories to emerge in recent years.

It has a dual purpose: improving safety and reducing back pain. Its designer, Dr Graham Cox, received his doctorate in physiology from the Royal Free Hospital, London, and so knows a thing or two about driving and back care. He points to advice from the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA), which says seat belts "should be worn as tight as possible, with no slack" and Euro NCAP safety tests, which are conducted with dummies sat in the ideal position, with the base of the spine against the back of the seat.

However, Dr Cox's research shows that during the course of a normal journey, most of us slip forward in our seats and our hips rotate, allowing the lap belt to ride up over the stomach. This means we're putting pressure on the base of our spines and increasing the chance that we can "submarine" (slip under the belt) during a frontal impact. This, claims Dr Cox, significantly reduces the safety score of a car in the real world.

The SHOFT device is designed to help prevent slack from developing in the belt during a journey, and keeps our spines in the optimal position.

But does it work? My SHOFT test immediately followed a test of a dual-lens dashcam, which recorded events going on inside the cabin. It became apparent, looking at the footage, that I often tug on the belt to help remove slack — it's not something that I had noticed doing before; it's an involuntary reaction. Having fitted the SHOFT, I was on the lookout to see if I still felt the need to tighten the belt. Astonishingly, it wasn't necessary at all and the seat felt much more comfortable for the duration of the journey.

Dr Cox also says that SHOFT is perfect for use with child booster seats, as it helps reduced movement of the seat during cornering, which increases safety.

The design may be simple — it can be fitted in two or three seconds — but it is smart enough to allow free movement of the belt along the buckle when unplugged, and feels solid and durable, suggesting it will last. It certainly reduces back pain and could also reduce the risk of injury in an accident.

£24.99 may seem a bit steep for a couple of pieces of rubber but SHOFT certainly lives up to its comfort claims, which for many back pain sufferers will be worth the price alone. Given the promise of increased safety, too, SHOFT seems like a no-brainer, particularly for those who drive regularly or over long distances.