

Office Chair: Choosing the Right Ergonomic Office Chair

Working in an office typically involves spending a great deal of time sitting in an office chair - a position that adds stress to the structures in the spine. Therefore, to avoid developing or compounding back problems, it's important to have an office chair that's ergonomic and that supports the lower back and promotes good posture.

- Read [Ten Tips for Improving Posture and Ergonomics](#)

What Kind of Ergonomic Office Chair is Best?

There are many types of ergonomic chairs available for use in the office. No one type of office chair is necessarily the best, but there are some things that are very important to look for in a good ergonomic office chair. These things will allow the individual user to make the chair work well for his or her specific needs.

- See [Office Chair: How to Reduce Back Pain?](#)

This article will examine the traditional office chair, as well as alternatives that can be used as an office chair that may be preferred for some people with back problems.

What Features Should a Good Ergonomic Office Chair Possess?

In first considering the "conventional" style of office chair, there are a number of things an ergonomic chair should have, including:

- **Seat height.** Office chair seat height should be easily adjustable. A pneumatic adjustment lever is the easiest way to do this. A seat height that ranges from about 16 to 21 inches off the floor should work for most people. This allows the user to have his or her feet flat on the floor, with thighs horizontal and arms even with the height of the desk.
 - See [Good Posture Helps Reduce Back Pain](#)
- **Seat width and depth.** The seat should have enough width and depth to support any user comfortably. Usually 17-20 inches wide is the standard. The depth (from front to back of the seat) needs to be enough so that the user can sit with his or her back against the backrest of the ergonomic office chair while leaving approximately 2 to 4 inches between the back of the knees and the seat of the chair. The forward or backward tilt of the seat should be adjustable.

SEE THE VIDEO: [Watch Your Back Video - Tips for Good Back Health in Office Chairs](#)

- **Lumbar support.** Lower back support in an ergonomic chair is very important. The lumbar spine has an inward curve, and sitting for long periods without support for this curve tends to lead to slouching (which flattens the natural curve) and strains the structures in the lower spine. An ergonomic chair should have a lumbar adjustment (both height and depth) so each user can get the proper fit to support the inward curve of the lower back.
 - For further reading: [Lumbar Spine Anatomy and Pain](#)
- **Backrest.** The backrest of an ergonomic office chair should be 12 to 19 inches wide. If the backrest is separate from the seat, it should be adjustable in height and angle. It should be able to support the natural curve of the spine, again with special attention paid to proper support of the lumbar region. If the office chair has the seat and backrest together as one piece, the backrest should be adjustable in forward and back angles, with a locking mechanism to secure it from going too far backward once the user has determined the appropriate angle.
 - Read more: [Office Chair Back Support](#)
- **Seat material.** The material on the office chair seat and back should have enough padding to be comfortable to sit on for extended periods of time. Having a cloth fabric that breathes is preferable to a harder surface.
- **Armrests.** Office chair armrests should be adjustable. They should allow the user's arms to rest comfortably and shoulders to be relaxed. The elbows and lower arms should rest lightly, and the forearm should not be on the armrest while typing.
- **Swivel.** Any conventional style or ergonomic chair should easily rotate so the user can reach different areas of his or her desk without straining.

Office Chair: Ergonomic Chair Alternatives to Traditional Office Chairs

As an alternative to the more traditional [office chair](#), new styles of ergonomic chairs have been designed to try to create good support, comfort, and promote good posture. These chairs may take a little getting used to, but typically become very comfortable over time. Use of these types of ergonomic chairs can be very beneficial for some people with lower back pain or discomfort.

- See [Ergonomics of the Office and Workplace: An Overview](#)

SEE THE VIDEO: [Watch Your Back Video - Tips for Good Back Health in Office Chairs](#)

Kneeling Ergonomic Chair

The kneeling chair is an office chair that has no back, and places the user in a modified kneeling position. The design encourages good posture by sliding the hips forward and aligning the back, shoulders, and neck. Primary support is from the seat of the chair, with additional support coming from the shins. This type of ergonomic chair distributes the weight between the pelvis and the knees, which reduces spinal compression, and therefore reduces the stress and tension in the lower back and leg muscles. This ergonomic chair has a forward slanting seat that leads to a more natural position for the spine. The result is an office chair that makes sitting in the proper position feel comfortable and effortless.

Saddle Ergonomic Chair

The saddle chair is another ergonomic chair that can be used as a desk chair or computer chair. This type of office chair is in the shape of a horse's saddle and puts the user in a position somewhere between sitting and standing, similar to the position used when riding a horse. This allows the legs to drop naturally, and widen, creating a healthy and stable position. This position is often useful for patients with lower back problems. With long term use it can even [strengthen the back muscles](#). These ergonomic chairs have an adjustable height to be appropriate for different users. The design is intended to eliminate some of the typical problems experienced with a traditional office chair such as circulation system problems and slouching forward.

Exercise Ball Ergonomic Chair

The exercise ball chair is another completely different type of ergonomic chair. As the name states, it is a ball, which is large enough to support the user in any long-term sitting usage, and works well as a desk chair or computer chair. The major advantage to this type of chair is that it encourages movement and active sitting. There is a slight bouncing involved that keeps the legs moving, which stimulates circulation and keeps muscles busy, reducing stress and fatigue. Sitting on the ball makes slouching difficult, and the positioning needed to stay on the ball will automatically improve posture. The ball comes in different sizes to find the appropriate height for individual users. Some of these chairs can be modified with a base frame with wheels for improved mobility, and can even have a backrest attached.

- See [Choosing the Right Exercise Ball](#)

Recliner Chair

For some people, sitting in a reclined position is most comfortable for their backs. For example, people with pain from [lumbar spinal stenosis](#) or degenerative often will feel most comfortable in a reclined position with feet propped up on a footrest. For these people, one option may be to use a recliner while working. Small tables are available that attach to the reclining chair and can swivel over the chair to allow one to work comfortably on a laptop or do paperwork.

SEE THE VIDEO: [Watch Your Back Video - Tips for Good Back Health in Office Chairs](#)

No matter what type of ergonomic chair or regular office chair is used, short breaks should be taken throughout the day to improve circulation. Getting up from the chair from time to time will encourage stronger posture, relieve strain on the eyes, and reduce fatigue.

[Lefler, Rodney K., DC](http://www.spine-health.com/wellness/ergonomics/office-chair-choosing-right-ergonomic-office-chair). "Office Chair: Choosing the Right Ergonomic Office Chair." *Spine-health*. Spine-health.com, 07 Feb. 2004. Web. 29 Apr. 2014. <<http://www.spine-health.com/wellness/ergonomics/office-chair-choosing-right-ergonomic-office-chair>>.



SEE THE VIDEO: [Watch Your Back Video - Tips for Good Back Health in Office Chairs](#)