Ergonomics: What to Look for in a Chair



Base

What to Look for:

- Casters (aka wheels) appropriate for type of floor (i.e. hard wheel type for carpet vs. soft wheel for hard floor)
- 5-point base for increased stability
- Swivel base

Avoid: Stationary chairs that are non-adjustable such as ‘stacker chairs’, ‘guest chairs’ and stools or sit/stand chairs that are appropriate for standing height desks.



Seat Height Position

What to Look for:

- Pneumatic height adjustment
- Seat will raise to required height with your feet flat on the floor

Tip: To measure where you will need to position the seat pan height; when standing, measure the distance from the floor to just below your kneecap. Your feet should be supported flat on the floor or on a footrest with your knees at about 90o and your thighs parallel to the floor.



Seat Pan Size & Angle

What to look for:

- Appropriate weight capacity
- Appropriate seat pan size (an ‘average’ size estimate is 20w x 19d)

Avoid: Forward seat angle.
Tips: Width of chair seat required can be estimated by measuring across your hips, at largest part, while seated. Depth of chair seat can be estimated by measuring the length of leg between your knee and your hip (there should be 2-3 finger widths between calf and edge of chair when seated in chair).



Back Rest

What to look for:

- Adjustable lumbar support: The lumbar support in the chair should fit the small of your back and not be too low as this will promote slouching.
- Adjustable backrest height and angle

Avoid: Fixed back rest with no adjustments available.
Tips: Consider material, material should be breathable and comfortable. A headrest is not required but is a personal preference. Many people will not use the headrest or find that it interferes with natural movements.



Tilt (ability to rock backwards or lock into a reclined position)

What to look for:

- Ability to rock back and forth is beneficial. Tilt options such as ‘knee-tilt’ and ‘synchro-tilt’, are preferred to ‘center-tilt’ options.
- Tension adjustment. This will allow you to change how easy/hard it is to rock

Tip: A slightly reclined position is more comfortable for your spine. However, you need to be sufficiently upright to be able to read your monitor and type on your keyboard.



Arm Rests

What to look for:

- Adjustable armrests – preferable if they can move vertical and horizontal (closer to the body) and can be adjusted to the elbow height when your arms are hanging down and your forearms are at approximately 90o angle to your upper arms.

Avoid: Fixed armrests.

Additional Resources

For additional ergonomics information please visit:

- CCOHS Ergonomic Chair [1]
- Remember the Basics - Sitting [2]
- Ergonomic Guidelines and Videos [3]

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Links

[1] https://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/ergonomics/office/chair.html [2] https://www.uoguelph.ca/hr/sites/default/files/Office-Ergonomics-Sitting.pdf [3] https://www.uoguelph.ca/hr/ergonomic-guidelines-and-videos