



Selecting an Ergonomic Office Chair

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CompWest customers are assigned a dedicated loss control consultant to identify and address loss trends while serving as a safety resource.

Choosing an ergonomic chair:

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

What chair is best?

There are many types of chairs available for use in the office. No one type 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 their specific needs.

What features should a good chair have?

There are a number of things an ergonomic chair should have, including:

- **Seat height.** Seat height should be easily adjustable. A seat height that ranges from about 16 to 21 inches off the floor should work for most people.

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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.

- **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 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.
- **Lumbar support.** Lower back support in an office 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.
- **Backrest.** The backrest of an 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.
- **Armrests.** 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 office chair should easily rotate so the user can reach different areas of his or her desk without straining.

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