

Choosing a Lounge or Dining Chair

Choosing a comfortable and functional chair involves careful consideration of personal taste, the intended use for the chair and the user. The following guidelines and information may help in selecting a suitable lounge chair or dining chair. Occupational Therapists can assist with the selection of the most appropriate chair for an individual's needs. Lounge chairs are generally designed to allow a person to relax, or to do sedentary activities such as watching television, reading, or engaging in conversation. Dining chairs are designed to make eating, drinking and other tabletop activities such as card playing and writing easier.



FEATURES TO LOOK FOR

Suitable seat height: The person should be able to sit down and stand up easily. The user's feet should be supported flat on the floor, or a footrest when seated. Chair raising blocks raise an existing chair to an appropriate height. For a dining chair used at a table, the person forearms should rest at about 90 degrees on the table. Some chairs feature height adjustment, which makes them suitable for several users. Often the table height can also be adjusted up or down to suit.



Firm Seat: The seat should be as firm to make rising easier and to support good posture, yet comfortable.

Adequate seat depth: The seat should be deep enough to support along the length of the buttocks and thighs, with the front rounded off to avoid pressure behind the knees. Some chairs also offer adjustable seat depth.

Adequate seat width: The width of the seat should allow about 2.5cm of space on each side of the thighs.



SUPPORTIVE BACKREST

The backrest should support the natural curves in the back. A lounge chair should also provide support for the head and neck.

A leg rest should be used with a reclining seat to raise the legs and avoid strain on the lower back.



ARMRESTS

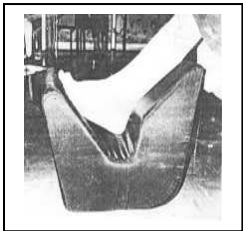
The armrests should be close to the person's side to allow comfortable support of the forearm and relaxation of the shoulders. The elbows should rest at about 90 degrees from the body when the shoulders are relaxed.

The armrests assist with sitting down and standing up. They should be long enough to be level with the front of the seat. This also allows the full length of the arms and hands to be supported.



Padding on the armrests can increase comfort, but should be firm enough for stability when using them to assist standing.

On a dining chair the armrests should allow the person to sit close to the table. Some chairs feature adjustable height armrests or swing away armrests.



FOOTRESTS

Personal preference and medical advice often determines the most suitable style of footrest.

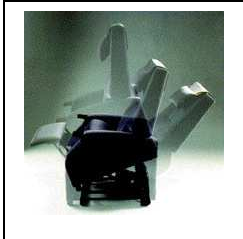
Many brands of chairs offer an optional footrest. Many styles of footrests are available. Some provide support only to the feet, while others will support the feet and the lower legs.



LIFTING CHAIRS/LIFT AND RECLINE CHAIRS

These chairs are available in manual or electric models and may come with a reclining backrest. The maximum recommended user weights for each chair vary depending on the brand, so it is best to check this with the supplier.

The manual lift models help the user with standing. The person must still move themselves to a standing position, but they are "boosted" by the seat. Spring tension can be easily adjusted according to the user's weight and ability.



The electric lift and recline models raise the person into a standing position with minimum effort from the user.

The control switches are located in a hand held unit or mounted in the armrest. These electric chairs plug into standard household power points.

NEED TO KNOW MORE?

Telephone, fax or e-mail your enquiry to obtain further information from one of the therapists' about products. Alternatively, you can make an appointment to trial the equipment at our display centres or through our outreach service. Please phone LifeTec Queensland for further details.

Last Updated: March 2009

LifeTec Queensland

BRISBANE
Level One, Reading Newmarket
Cnr Newmarket & Enoggera Roads
(PO Box 3241), Newmarket Qld 4051
Phone: 07 3552 9000 or 1300 885 886
Facsimile: 07 3552 9088

Email: mail@lifetec.org.au
www.lifetec.org.au
Independent Living Centre
Association of Queensland
Incorporated trading as LifeTec
Queensland ABN 25 773 960 273

TOWNSVILLE
Shop G-3A, Domain Central
103 Duckworth Street
(PO Box 8280), Garbutt, Townsville Qld 4814
Phone: 07 4759 5600
Facsimile: 07 4759 5688

