



Aberdeenshire
Health & Social Care
Partnership

Top Tips for Buying an Armchair



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Are you finding it difficult to
get up from your sofa?

Is standing up harder
than it used to be?

*If you answered yes, then it is a
good time to think about buying
an armchair. A suitable armchair
can make a big difference.*

Choosing the right type of arm chair
can help you to stay independent
and active for much longer.

Here are our Top Ten Tips. Follow the
tips to help you find a chair that will
meet your needs now and in the future.

TIP 1

Seat Height

It is very important to buy a chair that is the
right height for you. This will make standing
easier and sitting more comfortable.

Sit down on a chair with your feet flat on
the ground. Measure from the floor to
the back of your knee. Add 1 or 2
inches to this measurement. This is the
ideal height for your new armchair. If
you cannot do this yourself, you could
ask someone to help with this.

Check that your hips and knees are
in line. If your knees are higher than
your hips, the chair is too low and
will be more difficult to get out of.

Tip 2

Seat Depth

An armchair that is too deep will be
uncomfortable and you could be at risk of
sliding forward in the chair. Before you buy
an armchair, it is good to try sitting on it.
Sit as far back in the chair as you can. You should
have space for 2 fingers between the back of your
knee and the front edge of the chair cushion.

Tip 3

Seat Width

A chair that is too wide is less supportive and will
make standing up more difficult. Here is a good
way to measure the perfect width for your chair:

Sit in the chair with your feet flat on the ground.
Place your hands flat on your hips. Your hands
should fit snugly - there shouldn't be a big gap
between your hands and the armrest. When
buying a chair if you measure the width straight
across your hips while sitting in a chair and
then add 1 or 2 inches this should give you the
width of chair that will fit you well.

Tip 4

Armrests

Good armrests are very important to
help you stand up. They should be firm
and easy to grip, like the ones shown in
the photo on the following page.

To test a chair, place your arms on the armrests.
You should feel comfortable with the height
of them. Are they firm enough to push on
to stand up? Can you hold on to them for
support when getting up from the chair?

Your shoulder should be in a neutral position
at rest, not too high that your shoulders
are pushed up and not too low that you
have to lean over in order for your elbow
to make contact with the armrest.

Tip 5

Fabric

Think about the type of fabric you need. Does your chair need to be easy to clean? Do you sit for longer periods of time? If so, a moisture-resistant and breathable fabric will help protect your skin.

Try sitting on the chair, before you buy. Does it feel comfortable? Is it easy to adjust your position while sitting? Does it feel too slippery? It is a good idea to talk to a salesperson if you have any special requirements.

Tip 6

Chair legs

It is good if the chair has slim, tall feet, like in the photo shown on this page.

This style means that special equipment can be used in the future if you need extra help getting out of the chair. It is also easier to clean under this style of armchair.

Think about the type of flooring you have – do you need to add non-slip stickers to the feet of the chair? Try not to buy a chair on wheels or castors. It is important your chair does not slide backwards when you sit down or when you push on the armrests to stand up.

Is there space beneath the seat to allow you to push your feet backwards? You may be able to stand up easier if you can get one foot slightly behind the other.

Tip 7

The Backrest

It is good if the chair has a high backrest, as shown in the top right photos, that you can lean back and rest your head comfortably.

If you like napping in your chair, or it is tiring to hold your head up all the time think about a head

support cushion or a 'wingback' chair to give you extra support.

Ensure the backrest allows you to keep your spine in a natural neutral position. You should be sitting on the bones of your buttocks and not the bottom of your spine in a slouched position.

Tip 8

The Cushion and Comfort

If you can, try to sit in the chair for a short while before you buy. Does it feel comfortable? Is it easy to stand up from? Remember, cushions get softer over time.

Try to avoid chairs with very soft cushions – this will make it much harder to stand up. If you are going to be sitting for long periods of time, a pressure-relieving cushion may be recommended for your skin health.

Check the weight limit of the chair.

Tip 9

How to use your Chair

Think about what you will do in your chair. Will you eat, read, sleep, watch TV or knit? If you can, sit in the chair before you buy it and pretend to do these activities. This will help you decide whether it is the right chair for you.

Tip 10

Other Kinds of Chair

Riser-Recliner Chairs – These are powered armchairs that help you to stand up. Try to follow the tips above when purchasing, and ensure you buy a chair that is the right size for you. Swivel Chairs – There are many models of chair marketed as comfort chairs that have a swivel base. These are very difficult to stand up from and can swing away suddenly, causing you to fall. Therefore, we would not recommend them.



Good armrests are very important to help you stand up and it is good if the chair has slim, tall feet: Tip 4, 6



Riser-Recliner Chairs – These are powered armchairs that help you to stand up: Tip 10

If you need more help?

Buying a suitable armchair can make a big difference to your independence and health in the future.

If you have a suitable chair and are still finding it difficult to stand up, you can refer yourself for an Occupational Therapy assessment telephoning the Aberdeenshire Health & Social Care contact centre on 03456 08 12 06 and choosing option 2 to make a referral to Occupational Therapy.

If you purchase a product due to a medical need or if you have a physical disability, then VAT exemption may be available. VAT relief forms are available on the UK Government website and are called Eligibility Declarations by a disabled person for VAT relief using the following webpage address: www.gov.uk