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10 Things You Absolutely Must Consider Before Buying Your Massage Chair (Part I)

By Alan Weidner

The massage chair recliner has fast become a great substitute for traditional therapy that most folks will consider when suffering from back pain, neck pain, buttock pain, headaches, and even leg pain and stress.

The vast majority of folks that are looking for a massage chair are experiencing all or some of these symptoms. Massage chairs have been proven to do wonders for each one of these conditions. As a matter of fact, many of my patients that have purchased a massage chair have needed our clinic less and less for treatment of these common maladies.

Some folks just want a nice massage chair that looks good in their living room or office so that they can relax and just listen to their surround sound movie or music system. That's great too!

But if you are considering investing in a massage chair recliner, there are some things you need to consider before buying. What I'm about to tell you will give you exactly what you need and want to know. It's not just as simple as sitting in a chair to know if a model is good or not. There are a lot of "behind the scenes" things that this report will point out to you that will help make your buying decision easier. You've thought of some of them, like price and looks, but I will cover a bunch of things that have probably never occurred to you. This article is designed to make things clearer for you before shelling out your hard-earned money.

So, what do you absolutely need to know before buying a chair? Since they cover quite a lot of information, we will only discuss the first 2 things that you will need to consider. #3-10 will be discussed in Part II of this topic.

#1. Features – The old massage chairs only provided vibration. Well, today's chairs should offer the following:

Kneading - also known as "shiatsu", kneading rolls outward from the spine and feels much like 2 hands alternately rubbing your back. This is why it is said that massage chairs mimic the hands of a licensed massage therapist...kneading is the reason for the comparison.

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Percussion/Tapping - this is the light "karate chopping" on a client's back that you've probably seen before on TV. Well, that's what this feature imitates. Increased blood flow and muscle stiffness relief is the benefit gained. It feels wonderful.

Rolling – in our clinic, we have a \$2800.00 table that patients lie on, called a "roller table." Basically, wheels just roll up and down the muscles on either side of your spine. Here are the benefits: 1.) gentle moving of the spinal bones, and 2.) stretching of the spine and the muscles around it. Patients love it...and the roller table only rolls! Your massage chair should do so much more than just roll (and for a lot less money!).

Foot and calf massager – many of the new chairs have an attached ottoman that has a calf and foot massage feature administered by an airbag system. This feature is a real "must", especially if you spend a good portion of your day on your feet.

Full recliner - if you want your massage to be as deep as possible, you need to get a chair that has a reclining feature. And the further back the recline, the greater the intensity of the massage. The reclining uses your body weight to make the massage deeper. A lot of chairs don't recline much farther than 135°. You will want 170 degrees or more for the more intense massage option (by the way, the further back your chair reclines, men, the more it imitates a bed...especially important if you're ever forced to sleep on the couch!!).

#2. Durability - a well built chair should give you many, many years of wonderful problem-free pleasure. Even though you most likely can't know how good a motor is or how well built the chair really is, there are some other ways to know if a chair is a workhorse and is going to last a while:

Warranty - a longer warranty will give you greater confidence initially when looking for a chair. You want a company that stands behind their chairs and what greater way to show that than by a warranty. But, beware of long warranties that are so limited that if anything goes wrong there are so many loopholes to not cover your chair that it is as if you had not warranty at all.

Reputation - is the manufacturer of the chair well-known? Are they easily accessible if there ever is a problem? How can you tell? A toll-free customer service phone number to the manufacturer would be great. The length of time in business is probably a good indicator of how good the manufacturer is. Does the chair/company have any professional endorsements?

New vs. Used – there are a lot of used chairs out there, but just like a used car, you never quite know what you are getting. You can bet the warranty has expired, but you have no idea how the previous owner treated the chair. Who knows...maybe it was in a home that had kids jumping on it like a trampoline (that's exactly what happens in my home!).

In Part II, we will discuss items #3–10.

Dr. Alan Weidner graduated summa cum laude from Los Angeles College of Chiropractic, class of 1991. His website,

<http://www.message-chair-relief.com>

, offers the Interactive Health family of
massage chairs and massage recliners

Buyer Beware: Is That "Ergonomic Chair" Really Ergonomic?

By TC Thron

Not everybody knows exactly what ergonomic means, but it's getting to the point where everybody knows an "ergonomic chair" is better than just some plain old chair. Thus even Joe Newbie is more likely to buy the ergonomic chair than the chair that is not advertised as ergonomic.

The problem is stores and manufacturers are starting to put the word ergonomic in front of every chair they sell, whether it has anything to do with ergonomics or not. There is more to ergonomics than a little added cushioning in the seat.

So, What Is an Ergonomic Chair?

Ergonomics is the study of equipment designed with humans in mind, meant to reduce operator fatigue and discomfort. Specifically, an ergonomic chair should be highly adjustable, including not just a knob for lowering and raising the chair but adjustability in the back tilt and the height of the arm rests. An ergonomic chair should also have a sturdy frame (avoid plastic), a great deal of support, especially in the lumbar region, and padding that has some give and supports your body without losing shape.

Real ergonomic chairs cost hundreds of dollars. Look for manufacturers that specialize in ergonomics and are known for producing quality chairs. Examples are Herman Miller, Neutral Posture, and BodyBilt. Avoid gimmicky chairs (such as kneeling chairs and ball chairs) unless you have actually had the opportunity to try one and feel it's a good fit for your body. Remember, the chair that is comfortable when you first sit in it may not remain so after several hours.

Why and When Should You Consider Buying an Ergonomic Chair?

An ergonomic chair promotes good posture, reduces the fatigue that comes with sitting in one position for a protracted period of time, and it can even reduce the likelihood of developing Carpal Tunnel Syndrome and other repetitive stress injuries (many of these hand and wrist injuries start with poor posture at the computer).

Anybody who spends more than an hour a day at the computer should consider buying a good ergonomic chair. If you work 8 hours a day or more at the computer, you should definitely have a good ergonomic chair.

TC Thorn has more information on her site Ergonomics Information.

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