

OFFICE SEATING: Best Office Chairs for Back Pain Relief



“ *Why would you design something that didn't improve the human condition?* ”
- Niels Diffrient

Finding the best chairs for back pain relief is a quest for many people who sit most of their workday. While many office seating companies claim to have lumbar support, they almost always lack in this area.

One size does not fit all. It's important to note that most of our team has tried some of these, not all. But please ask us about any concerns you have and we will find an answer for you. There is no way you could ever know everything about a chair, good or bad, without sitting in it first hand.

Chairs that offer better lower back support do exist, and today we will take a closer look at the ones that are known, by design, in the industry to provide the best lumbar support.



1 Ergohuman LE9ERG 82/100 Rating

This is the highest-ranked chair for lower back pain, scoring 82/100 overall. Naturally protruding beyond the upper backrest, the lumbar support system is the first part of the backrest to make contact with your back. The backrest is height adjustable, allowing you to move the lumbar support on your back. This design also allows for it to be automatically depth adjustable, based on the user's weight and how



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The role of the designer is
that of a very good,
thoughtful host anticipating
the needs of his guests.
- Charles Eames

much you push into the backrest. Additionally, there is some flexibility with how it moves with you as you twist and move around in the chair. If you tend to lean forward while tasking, the lower support stays with you even if you cheat forward. This feature is perfect if you prefer not to lean back in the chair unless you're on a call or browsing the internet.

Because of the design of the lumbar and upholstery, the support is very specific. It doesn't spread across your lower back as a mesh alternative would. This is important because some users may not like that feeling. If you're looking for a little less pronounced lumbar support, the ME7ERG Ergohuman does a better job at flexing and spreading the support through the lower back.

When you lean back in the LE9ERG, the motion of the chair will pull the lumbar support up your back some. At about 50 perfect recline, the support becomes less pronounced, but it was still good. Depending on the position of the lumbar to start, it could require you to lower it down your back for the right support.



2

Eurotech Vera Mesh 81/100 Rating

The Eurotech Vera features the most comfortable backrest in a chair. Vera is also very good with lower support. With a score of 81 out of 100, the Vera managed to score well without a separate lumbar support system.

One of the things you first notice about the Vera is how perfectly upright the backrest positions your body. This allows you to comfortably scoot back into the chair and lets the natural curve of the backrest push against your lower back. Because of the mesh design, the support is spread out across the lower half of your back. When upright, the Vera has medium to medium-strong lower support.

As you recline in the chair, the lower support will start to diminish, with full recline offering minimal lower support. Because of the upright nature of the backrest, the Vera does provide excellent lower back support when leaned slightly forward for tasks.



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Because the natural curve of the backrest only pushes so far forward, make sure to scoot your butt back into the chair for excellent lower support.



3 Humanscale Diffrient Smart 80/100 Rating

The Humanscale Diffrient Smart chair has a score of 80 out of 100. Like the Vera, the Diffrient doesn't have an adjustable lumbar support system, but it does have a unique pivoting backrest design that provides medium support when seated upright.



The design of the Diffrient Smart chair allows you to sit nice and upright in the chair for tasking. Like the Vera, you will need to push yourself back into the chair to experience the best support. Where the Diffrient Smart shines is when you begin to lean back into the chair. As you do this, the backrest naturally pivots, with the lower portion of the back pushing harder into your back. From 25 to 100 perfect of recline in Diffrient, the lower support moves from medium to medium-strong to strong.



4 Steelcase Leap Ergonomic 80/100 Rating

The Steelcase Leap, technically ties the Humanscale Diffrient Smart with a score of 80 out of 100. While these two chairs scored the same for lumbar support, they couldn't be more different.

With a more traditional padded upholstered backrest, the Leap was still able to offer medium to medium-strong support, depending on how you configured the lumbar system. With Leaps intuitive lumbar support system, you can make precise adjustments to how much and where you want your support. The height-adjustable lumbar support allows you to move the pressure up and down your back. There is also a lumbar tension system, which will increase or decrease



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the curve in the backrest. Depending on how you adjust this it will change how pronounced the lumbar support feels.

If you like to recline in your office chair, the Leap is a good option with up to about a 50 percent recline. Beyond this point, you begin to lose some of the medium to medium-strong support in the lower region of the backrest. Unlike the Vera, at 100 perfect, the Leap does still provide light to potentially medium support in the lower lumbar region.



Humanscale Freedom Ergonomic 79/100 Rating

The Humanscale Freedom, came in with a score of 79 out of 100. This is the second chair from Humanscale to make it onto this list. After testing four different models from Humanscale, it is clear they have paid attention to providing excellent back support with their seating.



The Freedom Chair, with or without headrests, offers medium to medium-strong support when seated upright. The backrest is also height adjustable, which allows you to fine-tune where you like the most support. In addition to the height adjustment, there is a pivoting function.

As you move in the chair, the lumbar stays with you, creating consistent lower support. You may enjoy the Freedom even more when at the mid-recline position. The lower support was medium to medium-strong throughout the entire recline.

For those that enjoy working in a reclined position, the Freedom is best when paired with the headrest.

“Use the best possible materials and reveal the qualities of those materials and the craftsmanship of their assembly.”
- Karl Freidrich Schinkel

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6

Herman Miller Aeron Task

79/100 Rating

Herman Miller Aeron came in at number six, with a solid score of 79 out of 100. The model tested included the PostureFit SL, which is the best lumbar support add-on available for the Aeron. This is very important if you're interested in purchasing an Aeron and want excellent lower support.



The Aeron offers medium lower support when in the upright tasking position. One added feature that isn't common with most chairs is the ability to move the chair in a forward tilt position. This is a useful feature for those who really like to sit forward and task. It isn't for everyone since it gives the feeling of falling from the chair and requires you to engage your legs more than a traditional seated position.

Arguably one of the best features of the Aeron is the fluid tilt function that keeps your feet planted to the floor, and the backrest in perfect unison with your back. As you recline in the Aeron, the level of support when seated upright remained the same. Users that enjoyed the lower support when seated upright will get the same experience, no matter what reclined position they choose to work in.



7

Herman Miller Cosm

79/100 Rating

Right behind the Aeron, is the newest Herman Miller product, the Cosm chair. While a bit hesitant to suggest this chair for tasks, it did receive enough points to rank at number seven overall, with a score of 79 out of 100. The arms are uniquely designed to perform well in a conference room situation. If you decide to purchase this chair for tasking, look at the adjustable task arm option.



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The Cosm offers a unique feeling when you sit in it, with an almost floating hammock feel. The mesh on the chair is supportive enough to provide good lower support when you are pushed back into the seat and backrest. The design of the backrest, without an adjustable lumbar system, spreads nicely throughout your lower back.

The Cosm gets better as you recline back into it. We found the best support, which rated at medium-strong, was felt from about 50 to 100 percent recline. With the tall backrest design, it is a good option for those who like to work in a reclined position.



Eurotech iOO

78/100 Rating

The Eurotech iOO chair comes in with a score of 78 out of 100. At first glance, the iOO is easily mistaken for the Ergohuman series, with similar features throughout. With a pronounced lower lumbar region, the iOO offers a similar feel as the mesh series from Eurotech's Ergohuman series.



When seated in an upright position, the iOO has a medium to medium-strong lower support. Like the Ergohuman series, the lumbar system protrudes beyond the upper portion of the backrest, hitting your lower back even when sitting slightly forward in the chair. The mesh upholstery does a better job of spreading throughout the lower back than the LE9ERG, featured at number one on our list. If you are looking for a wider range of lower support, this could be a better option.

“A chair is only finished

when someone sits in it.

- Hans J. Wegner

The lumbar support is also height adjustable, which allows you to fine-tune where it provides the most support for you. As you recline in the chair, the support remains fairly consistent, with medium support even when in a fully reclined position.

The motion of the recline allows for the lumbar support to move minimally, offering more consistent support for the lumbar region than that of the Ergohuman series.

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Humanscale Liberty

77/100 Rating

The final product on the list, the Humanscale Liberty chair, is the third Humanscale product to be featured. With a score of 77 out of 100, the Liberty features a similar back design and function as the Diffrient Smart chair.



When seated in the upright position, the Liberty chair offers medium to medium-strong lower support. Like the Diffrient Smart, the initial pivot, when arching your back and slightly reclining, increased the lower support.

The biggest difference between the Liberty and Diffrient Smart was that once you reclined beyond 50 perfect, the Liberty only had light lower support. If you're looking for a mesh back chair with a lot of lower support while reclined, take a look at the other Humanscale chairs on this list.

Summary

“When design springs from an understanding of the people who are going to use a product, you begin to see forms that you would never have imagined.

- Niels Diffrient

Office chairs are a significant investment and we highly advise visiting our showroom and trying them out for yourself. If you have special needs team members, bring those people in with you to test drive the chairs for themselves.

Our inventory is constantly evolving. If you are looking for a specific chair to test, please give us a call to see what we have available in the showroom, 512-448-3769.

Ideally, it's nice to outfit your office with similar styles and colors of chairs. So ask us about that too. We can order chairs to match or compliment what you already have.

COME VISIT OUR SHOWROOM:

4201 Supply Court, Austin, Texas 78744
M-F 8-6, No appointment necessary

Information gathered through testing by GREG KNIGHTON of Beyond the Office Door, LLC