

**DISPATCHES
FROM THE HOME FRONT**

Recognizing The Chair

In A Quest For The Perfect
Home Office Seat, You've Got
To Sit Down On The Job

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Special To The Courant

uch.

My back hurts.

Ever since I began working at home, my search for the perfect office chair has become a hobby, without the fun.

I've spent more than \$200 on two chairs and I'm in the market for a third. I've done the "sit" test on at least a dozen chairs, scoured the Internet for a perfect chair, talked to an office-design expert on the importance of a good office chair, and interviewed an ergonomics expert at Cornell University on how to choose a chair.

Yet my search for a painless chair — one that I can sit comfortably on while staring at my computer for hours at a time — has been elusive.

I was a novice — naive actually — when I bought my first office chair after testing it for about 30 seconds at an office supply store. The seat on the \$79 chair

was soft and the back pliable. It enveloped me in that old-couch kind of way. But like an old couch, within an hour in front of the computer, I had a sinking sensation. As the minutes ticked by, my back continued sinking, sinking ... slouching. Within a couple of hours the vertebrae on my spine had curved into a "C," and my neck was heavy and jutted out, turtle-style.

For chair No. 2, I did my shopping on the Internet, and — caught up in a sale (half-price!) — I bought a cool-looking red office chair. When the leather chair arrived, I DIY'ed together, sat down, and immediately realized that it's not a good idea to buy an office chair without sitting in it first.

This time the seat was too hard, and there was a watermelon-sized gap between the back of the chair and my spine. I remedied this by stuffing pillows into the space, but they slipped onto the floor every time I got up, which was often because my back hurt.

TAKING, HZ

>> The chair back should recline and support your back in different positions. Movement of the back while you are sitting helps to maintain a healthy spine. Locking the chair's backrest in one position generally isn't recommended.



How to choose an ergonomic chair

▶▶ The chair back rest should be large enough to provide good back support. The best provide mid-back and upper-back support in addition to lumbar support.

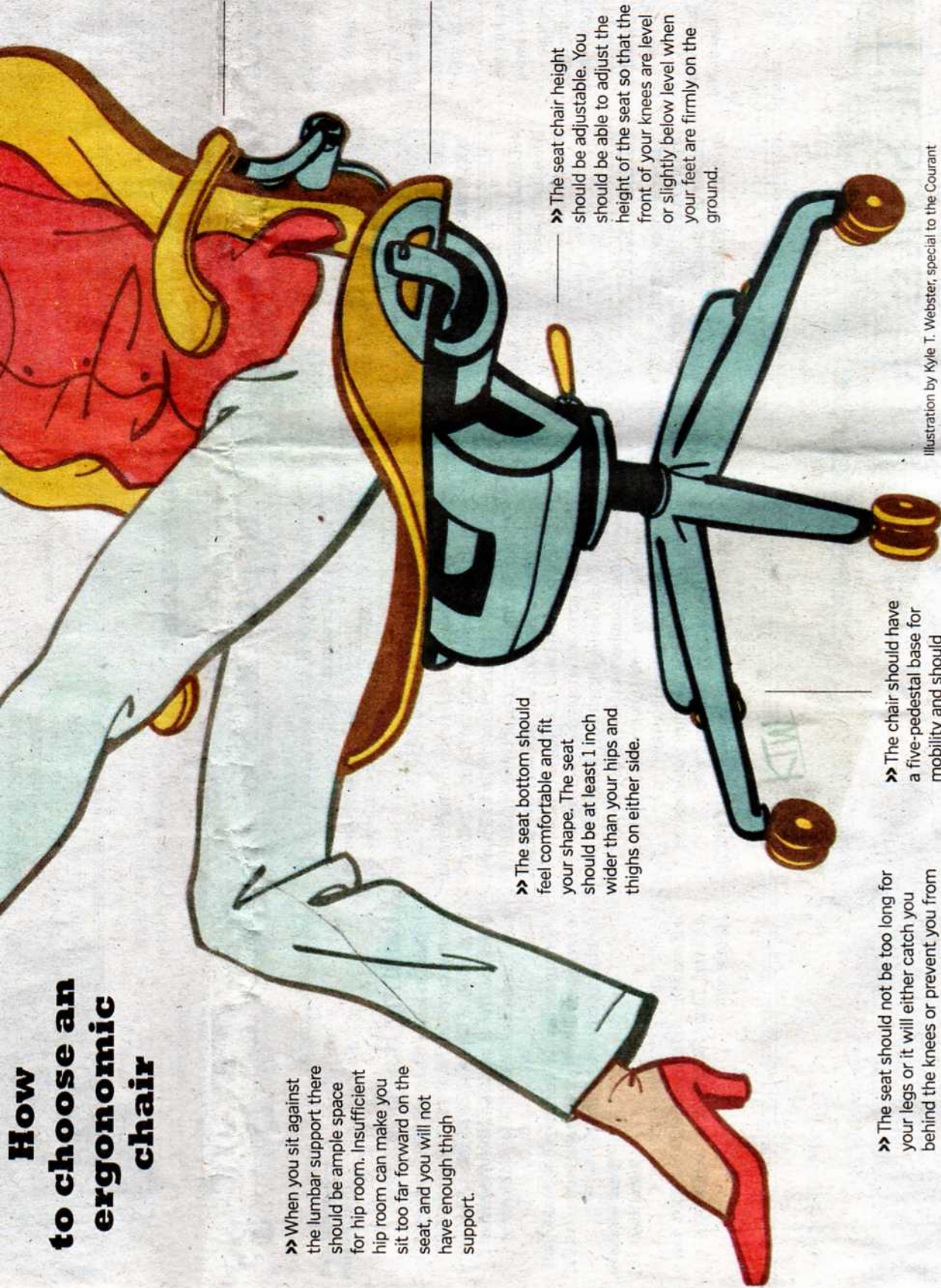
▶▶ If you need armrests, they should be broad, contoured, cushioned and comfortable. You should be able to easily adjust the height.

▶▶ The chair should have a comfortable lumbar (lower back) rest. The chair should have lumbar supports that can be adjusted up and down and forward and backward.

▶▶ It should be comfortable to sit on.

▶▶ The seat should still feel comfortable after 60 to 120 minutes of sitting.

▶▶ The seat should be contoured to allow even weight distribution.



▶▶ The seat bottom should feel comfortable and fit your shape. The seat should be at least 1 inch wider than your hips and thighs on either side.

▶▶ The seat chair height should be adjustable. You should be able to adjust the height of the seat so that the front of your knees are level or slightly below level when your feet are firmly on the ground.

▶▶ The seat should not be too long for your legs or it will either catch you behind the knees or prevent you from leaning fully back against the lumbar (back) support of the chair.

▶▶ The chair should have a five-pedestal base for mobility and should swivel easily.

Illustration by Kyle T. Webster, special to the Courant
SOURCE: Cornell University Ergonomics Web

