

Flying With Lipedema

Different airlines have different policies for accommodating (or NOT accommodating) Customers of Size. Sarah Thompson, a coach and writer Focused On Body Liberation, Fat Liberation, And Body Positivity, shared the following tips with me:

Through Southwest Airlines, travelers can choose to purchase an extra seat ahead of time which you will be reimbursed for after the flight. When booking you enter your name for the first seat as “Pat Smith” for example, and the second seat you enter “Pat XS Smith” This lets the airline know that you are booking an extra seat.

Paying for an extra seat when you book your flight allows you to pre-board and choose the seats you would like. You must speak to a Customer Service Agent to obtain the documents needed to get reimbursed, and to be sure you have the documents to pre-board.

You can call Southwest and they will make sure they offer you their lowest fare available. If discounted fare is not available, then you can call and book the second seat using the child’s fare. You need to call to get be sure this happens though.

If you are not able to book a second a seat ahead of time, you speak with the Customer Service Agents at the departure gate about your seating needs. As long as there is room on the flight, you will receive a complimentary additional seat.

Southwest changed their policy in 2012 after being sued by a passenger who was discriminated against because of her size. They are the airline with the most accommodating policy for fat people who fly.

Southwest Customer of Size Policy Link:

<https://www.southwest.com/html/customer-service/extra-seat/?clk=GFOOTER-CUSTOMER-COS>

Alaska Airlines has a customer of size policy as well. Theirs is distinctly different, because they will only reimburse if the flight is completed with one extra seat. Both airlines state that if you do not fit within the 17” of the seat (for coach) where the armrests are a boundary, you are required to purchase a second seat.

Alaska requires that you provide the name on the ticket, travel dates, flight information and ticket number when requesting a refund. You must also submit the request online or by calling customer service within 90 days of travel.

For these airlines and others, you can request a seatbelt extender when you board or after you get to your seat. You can bring your own, but sometimes airlines won't let you use one that isn't theirs (if they notice you are using one.) Seatbelt extenders for plane seatbelts can be purchased on Amazon, and you can purchase them for cars, vans, and trucks as well! Seatbelt extenders generally cannot be used in exit rows or rows 1 and 6 in Alaska Airline flights 1-999.

United also requires a second seat to be purchased if you do not meet these requirements:

1. The customer must be able to properly attach, buckle and wear the seat belt, with one extension if necessary, whenever the seatbelt sign is illuminated or as instructed by a crew member.
2. The customer must be able to remain seated with the seat armrest(s) down for the entirety of the flight.
3. The customer must not significantly encroach upon the adjacent seating space.

This means that they can deny your ability to fly if you do not meet these requirements, and you have not purchased a second seat and there isn't an open seat on the flight.

They **do not** refund the cost of the second seat. If you are unable to fly due to this reason, they will provide amenities including applicable meals and hotel accommodations for one night as appropriate, and waive any fees or penalties for the change in flight.

American Airlines official policy is as follows:

“For the safety and comfort of all customers, if a customer’s body extends more than 1 inch beyond the outermost edge of the armrest and a seat belt extension is needed, another seat is required. We encourage customers to address all seating needs when booking.

- When you call to book, Reservations will make sure you get 2 adjacent seats at the same rate.
- If you didn’t book an extra seat in advance, ask an airport agent to find out if 2 adjacent seats are available.
- You may be offered a seat in a higher class of service that may provide more space; in this case, you’ll be responsible for the fare difference.
- If accommodations can’t be made on your original flight, you can buy seats on a different flight at the same price as your original seats.”

Delta’s policy is:

‘If you are unable to sit in your seat without encroaching into the seat next to you while the armrest is down, please ask the agent if they can reseat you next to an empty seat.

You might also consider purchasing an upgrade to First/Business Class.

We will do all possible to ensure your comfort but you might consider booking an additional seat in order to ensure your best comfort during your travel. Please call Delta Reservations at 1-800-221-1212 and they will be glad to assist.’

Seat size also varies from airline to airline and plane to plane. It is worth doing some searching when you are booking a flight to see which airline and flight will offer you the widest seat size, especially if you can’t afford to purchase two seats ahead of time.

<https://www.alaskaair.com/content/travel-info/policies/seating-customers-of-size>

<https://www.united.com/ual/en/us/fly/travel/special-needs/extra-seating.html>

<https://www.aa.com/i18n/travel-info/special-assistance/special-assistance.jsp>

https://www.delta.com/content/www/en_US/traveling-with-us/special-travel-needs/require-extra-seat-space.html

