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How You Sleep Matters

Presented by: **Total Health Systems**

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Introduction

Why is it we sometimes wake up feeling tired or sore? You may not feel rested and worse your back, neck or shoulders may be stiff? Could it be how and what you slept on? The answer is yes!



If you're not getting a good night sleep, you may be able to improve the situation by using a new medium-firm mattress and by re-assessing your sleep positions.

In one published review of sleep, low back pain and mattress choice, researchers found that up to 50% of people with back pain, also suffer from sleep disturbances and they go on to show that poor sleep is one of the criteria that can be used to predict delayed healing after an injury.¹ Even the orthopedic surgeons agree: in a recent survey, 95% of those surveyed believed that mattress choice has a role in the treatment of back pain.² The vast majority of these musculoskeletal specialists suggest a medium-firm mattress as the best support to help an aching back.

In an article published in the *Journal of Chiropractic Medicine*³, researchers worked with a sample of healthy subjects who have experienced minor sleep-related pain but had no clinical history of disturbed sleep. In the study, subjects recorded their sleep experience for 28 consecutive days in their own beds and then they were given new medium-firm beds for another 28 days. The subjects had previously been sleeping on beds that were on average 9.5 years old. The researchers found subjects had improved sleep quality and efficiency after 28 days on the new bed system. In particular, the subjects' had reduced back discomfort after sleep, which may also contribute to less stress.

Another way to get a better night sleep is to adjust your sleeping position.

The Mayo Clinic suggests some simple solutions to improve your sleep that involve the use of a pillow⁴. If you sleep on your side place a pillow between your bent legs and pull your legs slightly towards your chest. If you sleep on your back place the pillow under your knees. And if you have to sleep on your stomach place the pillow under your pelvis and lower abdomen. Also use a pillow under your head, although this can create strain on your back. In which case you may try sleeping without a pillow under your head.

QUESTION:

What percentage of people with back pain also suffer sleep disturbances?

- A) 30%
- B) 40%
- C) 50%

ANSWER:

- C) 50%

TRUE OR FALSE:

A soft mattress is better than a more firm one.

ANSWER:

False

Presented by: Clinton Township (586) 228-0270
Washington (586) 781-0800

Chesterfield (586) 949-0123
St Clair Shores (586) 772-8560

An article in the Huffington Post ⁵ shared recommendations from various healthcare specialists, including chiropractors, medical doctors and others. The pros and cons of the most popular sleeping positions are provided below:

Best On Your Back



Pros: According to chiropractic and medical experts, sleeping on your back on a medium-firm mattress helps to best support the natural curves of your spine.

Pillow advice: Try using a very thin or down-filled pillow. If you use a thicker pillow, this can push your head too far forward, leading to neck strain and headaches. A small neck-roll would work to maintain the natural curve of the neck too.

Cons: This position may contribute to snoring.

Next-Best On Your Side



Pros: Can also give adequate support for your spine curves, but requires proper pillow selection to ease strain on neck and pelvis

Pillow advice: Be sure to select a head pillow that stays firm, to support the distance between your head and your shoulder. Also, place a pillow between your knees to maintain proper pelvic alignment and ease the strain on tight hip muscles.

Cons: Dermatologists say this position can contribute to facial wrinkles, and some MDs suggest it may also promote breast-sagging.

Worst On Your Stomach



Pros: None.

Pillow advice: If you can only find rest in this position, use no pillow at all.

Cons: Turning your head to one side while you sleep is bad for your neck. Also, if you have a soft mattress, your low back is almost guaranteed to be sore in the morning when you wake up from this position. If you can avoid it, do not sleep in this position.

At your next visit, review your sleeping habits with your chiropractor. A poor mattress, pillow, or improper sleeping position may be the one thing preventing you from enjoying a healthy, pain-free spine!

Quote to Inspire

*“Always do right.
This will gratify some
people and astonish
the rest “*

Mark Twain

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