



Wellness News Network™

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Sleep – Can It Hurt My Back?

Presented by:

At the end of a long day, when we retire into the warm embrace of our blankets, pillows and comforters, why is it we sometimes wake up more tired or sore than when we first lay down? How dangerous can a set of springs or space-age foam really be?

In this issue, we will discuss the perils of poor mattresses, and the best positions you should take to help prevent back pain and ensure a good night's sleep.

Can a mattress really hurt your back? Recent scientific research says YES!

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 the Journal of Chiropractic Medicine, researchers documented significant improvements in their subjects' pain levels, sleep quality and stress-related symptoms when their old mattresses were replaced with new bedding systems.³ Although it is common knowledge that stress can

affect our quality of sleep - and therefore our pain levels - this study shows the reverse is also true. If you don't get a proper night's rest, you are more likely to feel the stress in your body the next day. These researchers used new, medium-firm mattresses to achieve their results.

What people find 'comfortable' will vary from person to person, but as a general rule choose a mattress that is more firm than soft if you have a tendency for back pain. If you find your body develops sensitive pressure points after sleeping on a firm mattress, consider buying a thin foam-based top-cover to place over the mattress.

Now that you have the new mattress, what about your sleeping position? Did you know that how you decide to curl up at night (or not) also plays a major role in how you feel when you wake up in the morning?

A recent article in the Huffington Post covered this topic nicely.⁴ Recommendations were taken 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.

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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

QUESTION:

Which is the best sleeping position?

- A) On your side
- B) On your back
- C) On your stomach

ANSWER:

- B) On your back

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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