

TIPS FOR HEALTHY SLEEP

CHOOSING THE RIGHT BED & PILLOW



The age and quality of your mattress have a major impact on how you feel. A worn-out mattress can certainly contribute to back and neck problems. Most experts agree that traditional mattresses should be replaced every 5-8 years. Since you spend about one third of your life in bed, choosing the right mattress is critical. Unfortunately, mattress selection is a highly individual process as there is no single “best” mattress.

The following tips will help you make an informed decision:

- ✓ Choose a medium to firm model. Mattresses that are either too soft or excessively hard can aggravate back pain.
- ✓ Keep the pillow-top relatively thin. An excessively plush topper is the equivalent of placing a cheap mattress on top of a good one.
- ✓ Always replace the box spring foundation when you replace the mattress.
- ✓ Select a pillow that will hold your head in a neutral position while sleeping on your side or back.
- ✓ Avoid excessively thick or multiple pillows.
- ✓ Choose a fiberfill or feather/down pillow as these are usually better than foam.

SLEEP POSTURE

The position you sleep in may affect your condition.

- ✓ Finding your ideal sleep position usually takes some experimentation, but two of the most popular are sleeping on your side with a pillow between your knees, or on your back with a pillow either underneath your knees.
- ✓ While many patients with neck pain or low back pain will want to avoid sleeping on their stomach, some people, particularly younger patients with sciatica, might find stomach sleeping is most comfortable.



GETTING IN & OUT OF BED

Here are a couple of tips to help you get in and out of bed more comfortably:



- ✓ To lie down: Sit on the edge of the bed, pull your arms to your sides and tilt your body into the bed, maintaining the bend of your knees at 45 degrees. Finally, bring your feet into a lying position or roll onto your back.
- ✓ To get up: From a side-lying position with your knees bent, push your body upright into a sitting position, swinging your legs over the edge of the bed as you rise.

GENERAL SLEEP HABITS

Researchers recommend sleeping for 7-9 hours per night. Even small deficits can pose problems like decreased athleticism, diminished brain function, increased inflammation and a greater likelihood to get sick- sleeping only 6 hours per night makes you four times more likely to catch a cold when compared to sleeping 7 or more hours. Follow these additional tips for better sleep:

- ✓ Limit screen time before retiring- the blue light emitted from computer monitors, phones and TV's can limit melatonin production and adversely affect sleep. Try reading from a book or magazine instead.
- ✓ Ideally, eat your last meal 3-4 hours before bedtime and especially limit heavy, spicy or high-fat foods. Ration how much you drink before bedtime to minimize bathroom breaks. Particularly limit caffeine in the afternoon and evening- caffeine has a half-life of 6-9 hours and can keep you awake long after the last sip.
- ✓ Stick to a sleep schedule, trying to retire and arise at the same time each day, including weekends.
- ✓ Choose 100% cotton sleep clothes and sheets over synthetic materials (i.e. polyester). Some research has suggested that your "deep" REM sleep improves when your mattress is oriented so that your body is aligned North and South as opposed to East and West.
- ✓ Most people sleep best in a cool room; ideally between 60-67 degrees F.
- ✓ If your budget allows, consider a temperature control device, i.e. Chili Pad, to keep your bed at the perfect temperature.

