

Guide to Mattress Shopping

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If you're thinking about getting a new mattress, go through these steps to figure out what you need!

Step 1) Check your current mattress's health

Before buying a new mattress, it's important to see if you really need a new one. Most mattresses will last around 5~10 years, up to 20 years for high-quality memory foam mattresses. This doesn't mean you *have* to buy a new mattress every decade, but it's something to consider.

Signs that your mattress is too old:

- Mattress is sagging or you can see craters in the mattress.
- Mattress has lumps/bumps.
- If you have a spring mattress, the coils are creaky.
- You never rotated your mattress. To increase your mattress's lifespan, most manufacturers recommend rotating your mattress a few times a year.

Step 2) See if you are getting good “natural” spine alignment

Pain can be triggered when the mattress is too soft or too firm, as your tissues will be either overstretched or exhausted from constantly contracting.

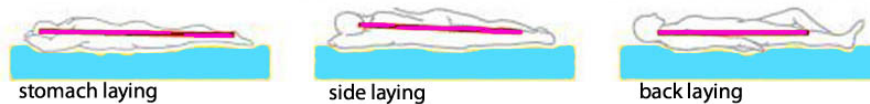
You want to make sure that your spine is supported in a “natural” position when lying down. However, your natural positioning for the spine will look different from another person's natural positioning. If you have a relatively fixed change in your spine from tissue change, your

natural position would be when your body is supported in that position. The goal is to cradle your body as if you're in zero-gravity so that your muscles can fully relax.

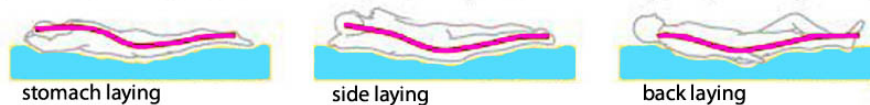
To test this out, you can either:

- 1) Have someone take a look at you lying down to see if your spine looks supported and naturally aligned.
- 2) Do a scan of your body while lying down and see which parts of the body feel tense. Then ask yourself, "Do I want that body part to be more sunk-in or lifted up?". *If you want it more sunk-in, you'll need a softer mattress; if you need it lifted, you need a firmer mattress.*

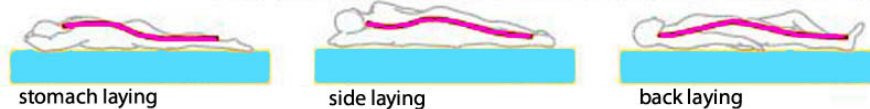
Just Right - offer conforming support and even weight distribution to keep your spine naturally aligned in a fully relaxed position.



Too soft - While a soft bed may feel good at first, inadequate support of your lower back (where your body weight is concentrated) can cause pain and stiffness.



Too Firm - A hard sleep surface provides uneven support and causes uncomfortable high pressure areas that cause you to toss and turn during the night.

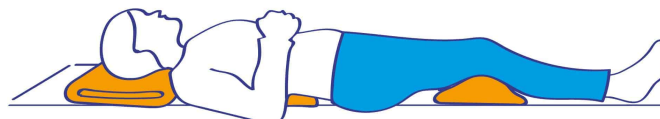


Retrieved from painreliefnomed.com

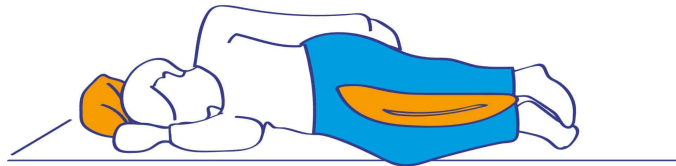
Step 3) Try sleep positioning strategies to see if you can maintain a neutral spine

If you work with an occupational or physical therapist, it may be worth asking them for recommendations on ways to support the neck, arm, shoulder, back, and legs based on your unique needs.

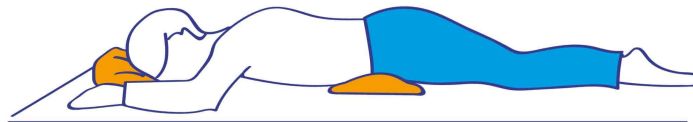
Best sleeping positions with back pains



Sleeping on the back, supported by various cushions



Sleeping on the side, supported by various cushions



Sleeping on the stomach, supported by various cushions

Retrieved from somnishop.net

*If sleep positioning doesn't work, and you've consulted your therapist,
it may be time to shop for a new mattress.*






Step 4) Find a good mattress store

Going to a mattress store with a helpful employee/good manager can make a huge difference. Look for reviews online, and if the reviews mention a helpful employee, call and ask when they are working. To make an informed decision, you'll need a knowledgeable and patient employee there.

Step 5) Brainstorm what type of mattress will be ideal for you

You won't truly know until you lie down on one, but here are some general guidelines.

Optional: If you have the means and the need, you could get an electric adjustable bed with a remote for easier bed mobility.

 INNERSPRING	Innerspring: A traditional style with coils. Generally firmer. Can be easier to get out of, but does not contour to the body as well and is generally not recommended for people with musculoskeletal pain. If you like innerspring mattresses, ask an employee to recommend one with a high coil count, as these will contour a better (Coil count of +300 for full size and +450 for king size.)
 MEMORY FOAM	Memory foam: will sink in a lot more, but can contour extremely well. Can be comfortable lying down, but getting in and out may be difficult, and sitting on the edge of the bed will be harder due to the softness. Memory foam tends to retain heat, so if you tend to run hot, consider getting one with a gel-layer on top, or be ready to go lighter on the blankets.
 HYBRID	Hybrid: Most hybrid mattresses will have a mixture of spring at the bottom and foam support on the top. It may be a good in-between option.
 LATEX	Latex: Will have more bounce than a memory foam, and therefore will be easier to get in and out of. It will give you medium support in general, although the firmness of the mattress will depend on the brand, the design, and its layers.
 PILLOW TOP	Pillow-top: An additional layer of cushion is added on top of a spring or foam mattress for a softer finish.

Step 6) Go to a store and try it out

Go during off-hours so you won't feel rushed. Ask for recommendations based on your research, and don't be afraid to test out the mattresses for 5 to 10 minutes to really see how it feels physically.

Step 7) If you'd like, wait for a sale

Common sale dates for the mattress industry are President's Day, Memorial Day, Labor day, and Black Friday.

Reference

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