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"treating the cause of your problem, not just the symptoms"

Need a New Mattress?

Sleeping on the wrong mattress has negative consequences for anyone with low back pain. A mattress lacking in back support reinforces poor sleeping posture, strains muscles and does not help keep the spine in proper alignment, all of which can increase low back pain. The patient also sacrifices sleep comfort if they do not choose a mattress that matches their individual preferences and needs. A mattress that provides both sleep comfort and back support allows the structures in the spine to really rest and rejuvenate during the night, thus reducing the symptoms of low back pain. With the variety of mattresses on the market, choosing the right mattress for sleep comfort and back support can be a confusing decision. For people with low back pain, it's definitely worth it to take time to select the best mattress for their back.

When trying to choose the best mattress for back support and sleep comfort, keep the following following practical guidelines in mind:

Personal preference should ultimately determine what mattress to purchase. Any mattress that helps someone sleep without pain and stiffness is the best mattress for that individual. There is no single mattress that works for all people with low back pain. Patients should choose the mattress that meets their standards for comfort and support and allows them to get a good night's sleep.

Understand and inquire about the physical components of the mattress. The coils or inner springs inside a mattress provide back support. Different mattresses vary in their number and arrangement of coils. Padding on top of the mattress provides comfort and comes in many different thicknesses. The depth of a mattress typically ranges anywhere from 7 to 18 inches deep. Choosing the number of coils, type of padding and mattress depth should be determined by the patient's preferences and needs for back support and sleep comfort.

Find a mattress with sufficient back support to reduce low back pain. A good mattress should provide support while allowing for the natural curves and alignment of the spine. Proper back support from the mattress also helps the patient avoid joint and muscle soreness in the morning. It is my opinion that a medium-firm mattress will provide more back pain relief than a soft or very firm mattress.

Achieve a balance between back support and sleep comfort when buying a mattress.

Overall comfort while sleeping on the mattress is equally important as sufficient back support. Sleeping on a mattress that is too firm can cause aches and pains on pressure points. A medium-firm mattress may be more comfortable because it allows the shoulder and hips to sink in slightly. Patients who want a firmer mattress for back support can get one with thicker padding for greater comfort.

Know when it's time to get a new mattress. If an old mattress sags visibly in the middle or if the patient is no longer sleeping comfortably on the mattress, it is probably time to purchase a new one. Putting boards under a sagging mattress is only a short-term fix and may cause more back problems and low back pain in the long run. If the old mattress is still comfortable for the patient, he or she may choose to wait before buying a new one.

Shop for the best value and quality of the mattress rather than for price. Finding a high-quality mattress is usually worth the investment, considering the effect a mattress can have on low back pain and sleep comfort. Mattresses with more coils and thicker padding tend to be higher quality and also more expensive. However, a higher price is no guarantee that the mattress is more comfortable or more supportive than a less expensive mattress.

Give the mattress a test-run before buying. When shopping at the store, shoppers should lay on the mattress with their shoes off for several minutes to decide if it is a good fit. If two people will be sleeping on the mattress, both should test it at the same time to make sure they have enough space and are both comfortable on the same style of mattress. Testing a variety of mattresses is necessary because mattress companies use different ratings of firmness and padding.

Lastly, just because you wake up with a sore back in the morning does not necessarily mean you need a new mattress. If your back has a mild problem to begin with, it will likely become sore whenever you lay still for 6 to 8 hours, regardless of what mattress you are sleeping on. By seeing your chiropractor to address any underlying back problems before simply buying a new mattress, you may save yourself a significant amount of time and money.