Types of Mattresses for Back Pain

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Mattresses for Lower Back Pain

Do you have trouble sleeping at night due to lower back pain? Luckily, the type of mattress you choose to sleep on can have a significant impact on alleviating this pain; a little relief (especially when sleeping) can go a long way when it comes to lower back pain.

In fact, poor sleep can also contribute to worsening lower back pain. Thus, choosing the right mattress can provide more benefits than you would expect!

While identifying the single best mattress for back pain remains a controversial topic, there are specific types of beds that are preferable for those with lower back pain and pain management.

In this article we will talk about:

- How a poor mattress choice can affect your back pain.
- The best type of mattresses for lower back pain.
- How to find long-term back pain relief with or without a new mattress.

What Does Back Pain Have to Do With Mattresses?

Back pain can be caused by sleeping on a hard or uneven surface. Overtime from several nights of sleeping in this fashion, it can develop into a serious problem.

Despite the prevention efforts focused on daytime habits and exercise, one commonly overlooked area is sleeping habits. It’s equally important to pay attention to reducing back pain in bed since poor sleep can worsen your back pain symptoms.

Since sleep disturbance is a top complaint among patients dealing with back pain, it only makes sense to consider the type of mattress you will be spending every night on.

The good news is that you do have control over your sleep quality. Investing in the right mattress is one step in the right direction towards alleviating your lower back pain and enhancing your wellbeing when you are awake.

As you sleep on your mattress, your spine and the various muscles supporting it are rested on the surface of the mattress. As you settle into your sleep position, proper alignment and support from your bed are essential to reduce and avoid soreness in your back.

What to Look for in a Mattress for Lower Back Pain

Sleeping on an unsupportive surface or a mattress that sinks too deeply can negatively affect your spinal

alignment and worsen your lower back pain. On the contrary, sleeping on a very firm mattress can also provide the same effect.

The specific types of mattresses that rank best regarding pain relief are usually memory foam mattresses or latex mattresses of good quality. Beds that are very thin and relatively inexpensive tend to have poor long-term satisfaction concerning comfort.

The reason foam mattresses work better is that they conform to the sleeper's body shape. This means the material allows wider parts of their body (like the butt and shoulders) to sink in while the other areas just lay atop.

The memory foam also allows the spinal cord to rest in its natural curvature. Mattresses that are too firm do not allow this, and beds that are too soft do not allow this either. Both force the body to rest in an unnatural angle which further tenses muscles overnight.

However, it is important to note that the ideal mattress will also be based on each person's preferences. Some prefer the feel of a memory foam mattress whereas others prefer the feel of other types of mattresses.

The specific material, thickness and firmness of your mattress will depend on the individual. Thus, it is recommended that you at least try your mattress out before purchasing it. Also, here are some extra tips to help you in your search.

How to Choose the Right Mattress for Your Lower Back Pain

Traditional mattresses are flat and stiff. This causes the sleeper to lay uneven regardless of what position they are in. This prevents the lower back from decompressing properly, and you will often find yourself waking up with various pains.

Alternatively, medium-firm memory foam mattresses or latex mattresses are a better choice. They do not force you into unnatural positions while you sleep. However, there are a few concerns people have with memory foam mattresses.

Safety

Regarding its safety, it is true that some memory foam mattresses are manufactured with hazardous materials. But many types of memory foam mattresses are made with safe materials that are often plant-based.

So, it depends on which brand you choose. If you have a memory foam mattress you are thinking about purchasing, it is recommended that you do your research beforehand to ensure it is made of safe materials. Directly contacting the manufacturer of the mattress if a great option as well, as you will be able to tell if they know what they are talking about or not.

Overheating

Regarding whether you will overheat in a memory foam mattress, this is one of the potential downsides of a memory foam mattress. They can trap heat and leave you too warm during the night. Thus, even though your back pain might feel better throughout the night, the extra heat will be keeping you up and defeating the purpose.

Some memory foam mattresses are now made with synthetic materials that can trap heat and leave you warmer than usual. However, luckily this is not the case with all mattresses. Those that are made with plant-based materials not only tend to be safer but also tend to be cooler and more comfortable to sleep in. This is especially beneficial for those living in hotter environments.

What is the Best Mattress Firmness for Back Pain?

Firmness is an important factor when it comes to choosing a mattress to alleviate back pain. It's long been

believed that a firmer bed is the best choice for those suffering from back pain. This has been a controversial topic among professionals. However, recent research has indicated that a hard mattress might not be the best choice.

The majority of professionals nowadays actually recommend a medium-firm mattress for those who are struggling with back pain. This is because it is suitable for those struggling with aches and pains, as it is not too hard yet not too soft. Also, it enables side sleepers to get more cushion in their hips and shoulders.

You Have to Experiment

One way to experiment whether you would like a medium-firmness mattress or a hard mattress is by taking a plywood board and placing it under your mattress. Or, you can simply put your mattress on the floor for the night.

Both of these situations will provide less cushion, and gives you an indication of what a firmer mattress might feel like. Try sleeping this way for a night or two and see how you like it.

It's All Based on Preference

The best type of mattress and its firmness will depend on the individual. You have to experiment and lay on a mattress before making a decision.

Purchasing from companies that allow you to bring the mattress home to try out is an excellent option as well. See which mattress allows you to have the best sleep while minimizing back discomfort, and make your decision based on that.

But to get you started in the right direction, try out a medium-firm memory foam mattress as this will likely best allow your spine to rest in its natural curvature and relieve muscle tension throughout the night. These are easy to find in stores and online and are durable yet affordable.

When a New Mattress Won't Fix Everything

An important thing to keep in mind is that a new mattress is not simply going to solve all your lower back pain problems. It’s not going to solve the cause of your back pain unless you have a very poor mattress at the moment that is the cause of your back pain!

A new and improved mattress is a way of coping at night and helping alleviate your back pain throughout the day. It’s not a solution.

To alleviate your back pain in the long run, you need to first see a professional who can give you an idea as to what may be causing it and what you need to do to solve it.

How Lifestyle Habits Cause Back Pain

You need to look at your lifestyle and see what may be contributing to your back pain. Back pain is incredibly complex, and we may never fully understand it.

However, by taking a step back and seeing how different things you are doing in your day to day life may be affecting your back pain, you will get a better indication as to what the real problem might be.

Some general tips as well are to:

Be More Active

If you are sitting for hours a day without performing any exercise, then it is no wonder that you are experiencing back pain! Get up and go for frequent walks. Your body was meant to move, so try to do as much moving as you

can throughout the day.

Be Mindful of Your Posture

If you are sitting for hours a day, this is likely coupled with sitting in a poor posture.

This means that you are hunched over forward with rounded shoulders, or your lower back is arched in a position of anterior pelvic tilt. Either way, this can cause a lot of problems in your back in the long run.

What you need to do is be mindful of this posture especially when you are sitting. Try your best to maintain a neutral pelvic and spine when sitting or standing throughout the day.

Avoid Stress

Stress is one of the leading contributors to worsening back pain and can run in a vicious cycle.

You're stressed out from whatever life has thrown at you, and you develop back pain to add to your set of problems, which causes you to get more stressed out and worsens your back pain. Thus, you can see the importance in trying your best to live a stress-free life.

Some excellent ways to relieve yourself are meditation, exercise and therapy if needed. Exercise is one of the best options you have as it causes a natural release of endorphins. This is your body's way of "de-stressing" the body, and you will feel the impact it has on your mood immediately.

Be Aware of Your Sleeping Position

Even if you have purchased the perfect mattress, your sleeping position might be the problem you need to look at.

Sleeping on your back with a pillow that is not too high or too low is likely the best way to sleep. However, it is not the only way to sleep, and you should not force yourself to sleep in a way that you do not like, especially if it is going to impact your sleep negatively.

If you enjoy sleeping on your side, just make sure that your neck has the support it needs and ideally you want a pillow in between your legs for extra support in your hips.

Try not to sleep on your stomach as this places your neck in a compromised position overnight and can lead to stiffness and muscle aches in the morning.

The Takeaway

To sum everything up, taking a look at your mattress and examining how your current sleep is on it is a great first step to alleviating your back pain. Improving your quality of sleep should be one of your priorities if it is something you are currently struggling with. Luckily, this can be as simple as purchasing a new mattress.

The best mattress for back pain relief will depend on the individual, however, an excellent place to start is to look at medium-firmness memory foam mattresses. Research shows that this type of mattress is the most promising.

But regardless of if you choose to purchase a new mattress or not, this is not a real solution to your back pain. You need to look at other factors of your life that you can improve as well. If your back pain is worsening, you want to see a professional for advice.

So, just be aware that while purchasing a new mattress is recommended, it is likely not going to be the ultimate fix for you when it comes to back pain.