



Barrhaven Chiropractic Health Centre

NEWSLETTER

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THE SLEEP ISSUE...Everything you need to know to sleep like a baby!

Snoozing, bedtime, napping, catching some Z's, siesta, shut-eye or forty winks...regardless of the names we use or the time of day, it is estimated that the average person spends one-third of his/her life sleeping, a fact one may want to consider the next time you're in the market for a new pillow or mattress. Now, let's combine this fact with two other very important variables: firstly, the lifetime prevalence of neck and back pain in the North American adult population is 33% and 80% respectively, secondly, poor sleep posture has been shown to be a causative factor in neck and back pain.



Powered with this information, I'm sure you all want to make your way to the nearest mattress specialty store to invest in that \$300 pillow and posture perfect mattress; but let us look at some more information before taking out a second mortgage on your house to replace your entire bedroom set.

Cervical Pillows

Due to the prevalence of neck pain, emphasis on the benefits of certain management strategies such as, cervical pillows, ergonomics, proper computer station set-up and physical activity have been of increased interest.

The goal of any cervical pillow is to keep the neck in a neutral position during sleep. Traditional pillows are often too thick causing the neck to remain in a bent position when lying on your back or side. On the contrary, if the pillow is too flat, the space between your neck and shoulder becomes unsupported when lying on your side. In both instances, the malpositioning can lead to joint irritation, muscle strain, neck pain and/or headaches.

So what's the best pillow out there? A study published in the Journal of the Canadian Chiropractic Association in 2004, looked at the effects of a semi-customized experimental cervical pillows on symptomatic adults with chronic neck pain (with and without headache). The pillow was designed to optimize neck and spine alignment regardless if the subject slept on his/her side or back. The results of the study showed that the semi-customized pillow was effective in reducing low-level neck pain intensity, especially in the morning following its use. Although the overall shape of each human being is similar, neck thickness and shoulder width vary. Hence, a pillow that is designed to allow the user to vary the thickness is best. Water filled pillows are ideal as the design incorporates a traditional pillow top with a water bladder base that can be filled to the user's desired thickness by adding or removing water. As sleep position changes throughout the night, the water base is able to conform to the head and neck position, providing you the proper support where you need it.

10 Ways to Improve Your Sleep

- 1. Follow a regular sleep schedule:** People should go to bed at the same time each night and get up at the same time each morning.
- 2. Follow a bedtime routine:** Listening to soft music, brushing the teeth, washing the face and setting the alarm clock—can set the mood for sleep.
- 3. Make the environment conducive to sleep:** The bedroom should be kept dark, quiet, and not too warm or too cold. Wearing ear plugs, using a white-noise machine or a fan can help.
- 4. Use the bedroom primarily for sleeping:** The bedroom should not be used for activities associated with wakefulness (other than those intimate moments).
- 5. Avoid substances that interfere with sleep:** Food and beverages that contain alcohol or caffeine can interfere with sleep.
- 6. Get up:** When falling asleep is difficult, getting up and doing something else in another room and coming back to bed when sleepy, may be more effective than lying in bed and trying harder and harder to fall asleep.
- 7. Exercise regularly:** Exercise can help people fall asleep naturally. However, exercise within 5 hours of bedtime can stimulate the heart and brain and keep people awake.
- 8. Relax:** Stress and worry are major impediments to sleep. People who are not sleepy at bedtime can relax by reading or taking a warm bath. People can aim to leave their problems at the bedroom door. Avoiding too much mental stimulation during the hour or so before bedtime can help.
- 9. Eliminate anxiety-provoking behaviors:** Turn the clock away so that time isn't a focus.
- 10. Eat a light snack:** Hunger can interfere with going to sleep. Avoid heavy meals, as they may cause heartburn which can interfere with sleep.

Mattresses

“I’m looking for a new mattress, what should I buy?” Without fail, every month I get the same question from distressed patients, who have spent the better part of a month gathering contradicting internet information and listening to countless sales pitches on the perfect mattress. Well look no further as I am going to list the key things to remember when investing in your new mattress.

1. There is no single mattress that is best for all individuals. Obviously, any mattress that aids in pain-relief and rejuvenating sleep is the best mattress for that individual.
2. Understand the basic structure of a mattress. The inner coils or springs vary in thickness, to alter the firmness of the mattress. The inner coils are what provide back support, whereas the mattress top allows for comfort.
3. Determine which firmness is most comfortable and find a balance between back support and comfort. Note that if the mattress is too hard, it may cause sore points on impact areas of the body (i.e. Shoulders and hips), especially when lying on your side. Soft mattresses may be comfortable at first but are not ideal for back support. Medium-firm is usually a good compromise between back support and comfort.
4. Inquire about the composition of the mattress (i.e. coils, latex, memory foam, springs etc). Although you may not find any difference in comfort between the various materials used to construct the mattress, quality materials will increase the longevity of the mattress.
5. A good quality mattress should last 10 years (give or take). Poor sleep, morning back pain and visible mattress sagging should all be signs that a new mattress may be warranted.
6. Use the trial period. Most mattress stores will allow you to try the mattress for 30days with no penalty for returning or exchanging the mattress, if you’re unsatisfied. When testing a mattress, try various sleeping positions and if you sleep with a partner, make sure you are both lying on the mattress at the same time. Weight differences can affect comfort and support.
7. Consider quality and value when purchasing a mattress and not solely price. The more coils and thicker padding tend to be better quality but more expensive. Is the health of your spine worth it?
8. Use a box spring! The box spring is the foundation of the mattress and adds to the support the mattress provides.
9. Shop around and purchase your mattress from a reputable company that has good service, competitive pricing and a long warranty.
10. Last but not least, take care of your new investment. Mattresses should be turned and flipped approximately every 4-6months. This becomes even more important if there is a larger weight differential between partners.



The best sleeping position for your back

1. Sleep on your side. Lying flat on your back or stomach changes the natural curves of the spine causing muscles strain and joint irritation.
2. Bend your knees and hips slightly to relieve pressure on the disks of your spine.
3. Placing a pillow between your knees can help keep your spine in neutral and reduce stress on the sciatic nerve.
4. Use a pillow that keeps the head in a neutral position.
5. Keep your arms in front of you, instead of tucked under your body or over your head, which can compromise the nerves in your neck causing tingling and numbness into your forearms, wrist and fingers.

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