

MATTRESS BUYING GUIDE

Few furniture purchases have an impact on the quality of your life than mattresses do. A mattress can be a significant investment that has a noticeable effect on how you feel each day, so it pays to do your homework. With a dizzying array of choices it's hard to know where to start. This guide will explain the options so you will know what to look for when you are shopping.

You don't think twice about test driving a car, so you shouldn't think twice about "sleep testing" a mattress. Don't be embarrassed! Lie down on the mattress for several minutes and assess how well it provides support and how comfortable it is. Lie in the position you normally sleep in. If you share a bed, both of you should lie down together. The only way to tell if a mattress is right for you is to lie down on it!

Is soft good for your back?

As with most things whatever is most comfortable for you is what's best, as long as the substructure provides enough support. If you like soft mattresses then get one that has good support under plush padding. Sleeping, or rather being unable to sleep, on too hard a mattress will do more harm than good. Keep in mind that if you are moving from a firm mattress to a softer mattress, or visa versa, your body will take some time to adjust to the new surface. It helps to know that when you have a firm mattress you are sleeping "on" it; with a soft mattress you are sleeping "in" it as the padding will gently cradle your body.

ANATOMY OF A MATTRESS:

Mattresses now come in several different varieties. What's underneath is relevant to how comfortable a mattress is and how long it will last.

Conventional Inner Spring: How many springs and what gauge of wire?

The number of coils in a mattress ranges from 300-800. Normally heavier gauge coils will provide firmer support with fewer coils. The thickest gauge normally available is 12.5 while the thinner gauges are in the 14-15.5 range. When you have thinner coils it is important to have more coils in the mattress since the coils give so easily. To get the best quality choose a name brand mattress from a reputable store and rely on the in-store sleep specialists.

Edge Support:

The edge of the mattress can be one of the first places where it will show wear since it receives the most concentrated compression as you get into and out of

bed. There are several types of edge support that are used to reinforce and support mattresses over its lifetime. The first is a foam perimeter, which encircles the mattress body with three to four inches of high-density foam. Some manufacturers space their coils closer together at the edge for added support. Spacer clips are another option, and are used on the perimeter of traditional inner spring mattresses to keep the coils from collapsing over time.

Convoluting Foam:

Convoluting foam often overlays springs in an innerspring mattress. It resembles the bottom of an egg crate with peaks and valleys between two and three inches tall. This layer of foam is good for relieving muscle tension as the peaks and valleys have a gentle massaging effect.

SPECIALTY BEDDING:

"Specialty bedding" simply refers to a bedding type other than the conventional steel inner-spring mattress. Below we've defined several variations of specialty bedding for you.

Enclosed Coil:

Enclosed coils are wire springs that are individually wrapped in fabric and sewn to adjoining coils. This means that when you roll over there is very little transfer of movement or bouncing.

Visco-Elastic Memory Foam:

Originally developed by NASA to compensate for the G forces astronauts endure during takeoff, visco-elastic foam is a very popular choice for mattresses. Memory foam conforms to your body in response to body heat but returns to its original shape as you move. This property helps to reduce the pressure points on the body as you sleep, which makes it the favorite of many. Memory foam mattresses can be used with a simple mattress cover, or they may incorporate additional layers of fiber and other support materials. Some retailers even offer the combination of memory foam and enclosed coils in the same mattress.

Latex:

Latex mattresses resist compression, leading to longer mattress life spans. They provide strong support for your back helping to maintain alignment and reduce pressure points. Latex mattresses can be used with a simple mattress cover, or they may incorporate additional layers with different configurations of latex foam or fiber and other support materials. When combined with a fiber-fill pillow top, latex mattresses can provide luxuriously soft comfort and firm support.

Air and Water Chamber Beds:

These are different from most mattresses because rather than using coils or springs they use pockets of air or water that can be inflated or deflated at will. This allows for two people to have different mattress firmness in one bed. The air

or water chambers are surrounded by high-density foam for support and structural integrity.

Zoned Mattresses:

Zoned mattresses vary the kind of support they provide from the head of the bed to the foot of the bed. The variations can be made with different coil counts, foam structures, or combinations of support materials. The result is that different parts of your body get the appropriate support. There can be anywhere from three to seven different zones in a zoned mattress.

Adjustable Beds:

The term adjustable bed refers to a mattress over a foundation that incorporates motors that allow the user to raise and lower the foot and head of the bed. Adjustable beds offer benefits to people with certain medical conditions, like sleep apnea or acid reflux disease, but they are also useful for those who like to watch TV or read in bed. King size adjustable beds usually consist of two twin units side-by-side and require separate fitted sheets. Adjustable beds can often be used with traditional headboards and footboards to better integrate them with traditional decors.

TO TOP IT OFF

Several terms are used to categorize a mattress' support. The precise terms may vary slightly from manufacturer to manufacturer, but here is a brief list of the terms and their general definitions.

Extra Firm: A mattress with a very firm feel and strong support with little comfort padding.

Firm: A mattress with a firm feel and strong support with a small amount of comfort padding.

Plush: A mattress with a softer feel and some comfort padding over a base with strong support.

Pillow Top: A mattress with a cushion of additional material attached to the mattress top. This material may be fiber, foam, latex, visco memory foam or an additional layer of coils. This means that rather than flipping your mattress periodically, it is rotated. Pillow top mattresses can be further categorized by construction techniques and how the top is attached to the mattress.

Euro Top: Euro top mattresses use a box cushion construction and have less separation between the top and the mattress. Euro Mattress Top

Summit Top: Summit top mattresses employ a gusseted, knife edge construction and are attached with a more distinctive separation between the top

and the mattress.

Contour Top: Similar to the summit top, contour tops employ a gusseted, knife edge construction and are attached with a distinct separation between the top and the mattress. What differentiates a contour top is the use of a zoned fill (foam of different densities for specific areas of the body) in the mattress top.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Low Profile Foundations:

Many manufacturers today sell low profile foundations; these have come into existence to help with the increasing height of many mattresses. It allows the bed to have a good foundation while being closer to the floor. If you are using an existing bed frame with head and foot boards you should measure to see how much space you have available for your new mattress and foundation.

Split Foundations:

A split foundation consists of two separate box springs that are designed to be used in pairs under one mattress. Split foundations are common with king-size mattresses, but they are available for queen sizes as well. A split foundation is particularly useful for older homes or smaller spaces where a traditional foundation cannot be easily maneuvered through a doorway, hallway or stairwell.

Deep Pocket Linens:

Today many new mattresses are thicker with more cushioning and support than older models. This means you may need to purchase deep pocket linens when you buy a new mattress. Be sure to measure your new mattress before you buy new sheets: deep pocket sheets can range from 16 to 30 inches deep.

****Tip:**

It's important to buy a new foundation when buying a new mattress. If you don't then the wear and tear on the new mattress will be higher because the old foundation won't be a match with your new mattress.

Mattress Pads: Mattress pads not only add an extra layer of softness, they protect the mattress from stains as well as regular wear and tear. Keep in mind that if a mattress becomes stained or soiled, it voids the warranty since health regulations prevent it from being serviced. Regular washing of the mattress pads can also help reduce the buildup of dust mites, which many people are allergic to.

After your purchase:

As with most purchases there are steps you can take to help increase the lifespan of your mattress. These include: avoiding moisture or extreme temperature variation (both of which can damage a mattress), using a proper

foundation, preventing contaminants from soaking into the mattress, avoiding bending the mattress when moving it, and keeping kids from jumping on it. Some retailers offer warranty programs, like Protection 1st, to help ensure the long life of your investment.

Interesting Fact:

According to a recent study at Wesleyan University, the scent of lavender can actually help you sleep better. The lavender increased slow-wave sleep, which is the stage where the heartbeat slows and muscles relax, and it may also be a factor in memory consolidation. Subjects who participated in this study also said they felt more energized the next day. Put a few drops of lavender essential oil on a tissue and put it under your pillow at bedtime.