

Selecting the Proper Pillow for You

Many people can sleep on any pillow and get a good night's sleep. However, there are others who have difficulty sleeping through the night for a variety of reasons. For those people who have disturbed sleep from neck or arm pain, or from allergies or who for those who get easily overheated while they sleep, the following information may prove helpful.

There are many types of pillows on the market that are made with various materials for different purposes. With the numerous pillow manufactures competing for your business with their typically unbelievable health claims, it is difficult to know which pillow is right for you. The following information is presented to hopefully sort through the maze of pillows and help you choose the right pillow specifically for you.

To select the proper pillow for your particular situation you will need to determine a few key features about yourself and your sleep habits:

1. First, what position do you tend to sleep in? Do you sleep on you back, your sides or flat on your abdomen (prone)? You may alternate between your back and sides, or remain primarily prone.
2. Is your neck painful and if so what is the nature of your pain? Have you recently injured your neck or had neck surgery?
3. Do you have allergies to dust mites or down (goose or duck)?
4. Do you tend to easily get hot at night or have night sweats?

The answers to these questions will help you determine which pillow is right for you. The information below is meant to educate people about the various pillows offered and not intended as a prescription or endorsement of any particular pillow. Nighty-night...

Side Sleepers

People who sleep almost exclusively on their sides require sufficient support to maintain their head and neck in a neutral position (not tilted to either side). The amount of support will vary depending on the persons shoulder width and firmness of their mattress. Additionally, it is known that people who suffer from snoring and mild sleep apnea typically benefit from sleeping on their sides. Here are a few pillows that fit this category:

1. Tri-Core pillow
2. Primaloft Comfort pillow
3. Jackson cervical pillow.



Lastly, if you sleep on your sides you should consider using a 'leg spacer' to maintain proper hip and low back positioning. The HoMedics Ortho+Therapy Memory Foam Leg Spacer works nicely for this.

Stomach Sleepers

If you like to sleep prone (i.e. on your stomach) you will need a fairly flat pillow to avoid extending (bending back) your neck for prolonged periods. Additionally, you will need to be able to turn your head to the side almost fully to breathe. You should try Nature's Preference Pillow

Easily Overheated

Pillows that are filled with buckwheat hulls allow air to flow through them, which keeps them somewhat cooler. For a high quality Buckwheat pillow try the EcoPillow. Remember that buckwheat pillows tend to be firmer and less accommodating than synthetic. Also there is the Ultra Comfort IsoPerfect pillow that is filled with cooling, temperature sensitive foam to reduce night sweats. There is also the Core Basic Water Pillow that is water-filled. This pillow not only has better support than standard pillows or roll pillows, but can also be filled with cool water at bedtime, for those who get hot fast.

Neck and Arm Pain Sufferers

If you have been diagnosed with a cervical disc herniation, protrusion or bulge, which is made better with cervical retraction (a chin tuck) or extension (looking up), then you should try the Tri-Core pillow. This pillow has a longitudinal ridge to support your neck while your head remains in a neutral posture. It works best in the supine position, but also works well in the side-lying position because the lateral ridges are built up to better support the head. They are available in standard or gentle density. There is also the Mediflow Waterbase pillow which was superior to standard and roll pillows in a study at Johns Hopkins University in 1997. If your neck or arm pain is caused by degenerative cervical arthritis, spondylosis or stenosis, and is typically improved with cervical flexion then you should try the pillows for 'Injured Necks' below.

Post-operative Necks and Injured Necks

Patients who have had neck surgery or recently injured their necks require very stable and supportive pillows. They should not sleep prone and typically do best on their backs. They require pillows that limit abnormal motions. These pillows are firm and

typically made of visco-elastic foam (memory



foam).

1. Tempur-Pedic Millennium pillow
2. Isoform Isorest pillow
3. Body Form pillow work best for these types of patients.

Hypoallergenic

If you have allergies to duck or goose down then you should try a synthetic pillow with a hypoallergenic cover. The Breathewell Certified Asthma Friendly pillow has a tightly woven cover that is suppose to be “mite-proof.” Be aware that recent studies have indicated that synthetic pillows hold more bacteria than feather pillows. Also there is five times as much dust-mite fecal matter in synthetic pillows than in down pillows. So know your allergies and pick your poison. The increased thickness of the down pillow cover (to keep the feathers inside) plays a role.

Research has shown that pillows contain thousands of fungal spores, which can trigger allergies and compromise a weakened immune system. Washing the pillowcase in hot water twice a week and using a pillow cover that is hypoallergenic helps control this problem. You may also consider encasing your pillow in a plastic cover that is under your pillow case. There are also a hypoallergenic satin pillow covers that help prevent ‘sleep marks’ and won’t absorb night creams (for all you “Sleeping Beauty’s”).

Therapeutic Heat-Cold

There are several pillows on the market that have pockets to insert a hot or cold pack. The best treatment position is almost always on your back because they have poor lateral support. They typically work best only for hot or cold treatments rather than for aiding with sleep.