



# Buying Smart

## What to know to sleep better at night

If you wake up each morning feeling as if you've tossed and turned all night, it might not be the economy. It might just be your old, worn-out mattress.

Sources vary on their recommendations. But, in general, if you've had your mattress 10 years or

longer (or five to seven years or longer if you're over age 40), it's probably time to replace it.

Not sure how long you've had yours? Look for signs of aging: sagging, wear and tear, visible springs or coils, lumps and, most important, how you feel when you wake up. If you're not feeling rested, or if you tend to get a better night's sleep when sleeping elsewhere, your mattress may have outlived its usefulness, even if it doesn't feel uncomfortable.

Shopping for a new mattress can be a daunting task. The selection has never been greater, and the prices range from a few hundred to several thousands of dollars. Experts recommend trying out several beds and looking for comfort and support, durability, cost (tends to go hand-in-hand with quality) and, of course, size. For couples, at least a queen size is recommended, and many prefer a king.

Just to complicate matters, mattresses come in several different types.

**Innerspring mattresses** are the most common and most commonly known. The "springs" are actually tempered steel coils that are available with various types of insulating upholstery or cushioning between them and your body. Innerspring mattresses can start for as little as \$300, but quality mattresses can cost \$1,000 or more for queen size.

**Foam mattresses** can be made with either a solid foam

core or several layers of foam laminated together. Many choices abound, including the new memory type. Prices start at around \$900 and can go up to \$2,000 or more.

**Airbeds** (not to be confused with the air mattresses you might use for camping) provide support through adjustable air-filled cores. Some models allow each side to be adjusted independently to accommodate the different firmness needs of each partner. Air mattresses can cost \$800 to \$2,000 or more.

Other options include water beds, electric adjustable beds and futons.

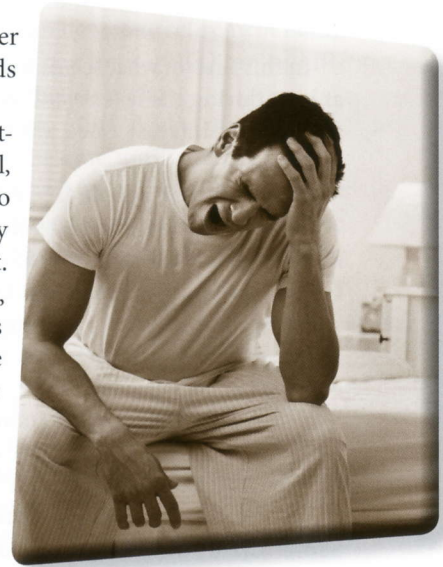
When shopping for a mattress, remember that, in general, durability and quality tend to go hand in hand. And quality usually also means higher cost.

Read consumer reviews, and then shop sales at stores you trust with knowledgeable salespeople. Try out those models that have received good reviews.

Armed with the knowledge you've picked up from the reviews, ask your salesperson to show you "cutaways" of the mattresses you're reviewing. Cutaways show the engineering that goes into a mattress.

The foundation for the mattress (e.g., a box spring) is also an important consideration, and it pays to get a matching set

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## The Care and Feeding of Your New Mattress

Once you've invested several hundred – or a few thousand – dollars in a new mattress set, you'll want to make sure you get your money's worth.

**Air it out.** Many mattresses are made with materials that need to be off-gassed before sleeping on them. This is especially true of the memory foam mattresses, but it's a good idea to let any newly purchased mattress set air out for a few days before putting it right to use.

**Don't make your bed.** (Well, at least not immediately.) In the morning, throw back the covers and allow any body moisture to evaporate for about 20-30 minutes before remaking the bed.

**Wrap it.** A good quality mattress pad and cover can extend the life of your mattress, as well as keep it hygienic and stain-free. When selecting a mattress cover, choose one that is easy to remove and replace on your mattress. Some covers are even designed to reduce dust mite allergies, and this will reduce the

need to vacuum your mattress.

**Flip it.** It's a good idea to turn your mattress every couple of months, head to toe and top to bottom. This prevents wear patterns from forming, and helps even out the stress on the mattress, particularly when one sleeping partner is considerably heavier than another.

**Clean it.** You should vacuum your mattress frequently to remove dust mites and other airborne particles. This can extend the life of the mattress and help prevent allergic reactions. If your mattress becomes soiled, be sure to follow manufacturer's cleaning instructions. In general, only vacuuming is recommended, and dry cleaning is rarely recommended.

**Baby it.** Don't sit on the edge of the bed, don't allow the kids to jump on it, and don't crush it when transporting it. Also, remember that the handles in the side aren't meant to support its entire weight, only to reposition the mattress on its foundation. – Yvonne Aileen