

DON'T LET YOUR PILLOW KEEP YOU AWAKE

Rest and sleep are the body's chance to heal itself from the postural, physical and nervous insults of the previous day. The use of some of the following pillows can improve the quality of rest and repair, allowing one to wake up more rested and ready to face another day.

Take an in-depth look into how to select and use the right pillow in this month's newsletter.

DIFFERENT TYPES OF PILLOWS

It is important to note that not all pillows work well for everyone. A short trial of one week should be enough time to decide whether or not the pillow is providing benefit.

- **Knee pillows.** Using a traditional pillow either between the knees (when sleeping on the side) or below the knees (when sleeping on the back) can help alleviate strain on the lower back.

When sleeping on the side, bending the knees and placing a pillow between the knees prevents the knees from coming together and keeps the spine in the neutral position. When there is no support between the legs, the upper leg rotates downward, pulling the pelvis, and distorting the natural line of the spine. Adding support between the knees can prevent

back pain induced by these types of forces and allow the back to heal and more properly rest while sleeping.



Usually, a firm pillow between the knees works better than a softer pillow because it serves somewhat as a kickstand to keep the upper leg from rotating over the lower leg.

When sleeping on the back, placing a pillow underneath the back of the knees helps reduce the load on the lower back. Some people even prefer to have two

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pillows to elevate their knees higher. With two or more pillows underneath the knees, the lumbar spine is flattened, putting less force on the facet joints of the spine.

This position is the best overall to help the back rest comfortably, and many people find that this is the only way they can sleep during a severe bout of back pain or while recovering from spine surgery.

- **Body pillows.** A pillow that is as long as the body can serve several functions for people who prefer to sleep on their side, as the top portion can be used to support the head and neck, while the bottom portion supports the knees and legs. Some people find this more comfortable than using separate pillows for the head and knees. In particular, women who are pregnant may find that a body pillow that provides added support for the abdominal area helps them rest comfortably.

Throwing the top leg over the body pillow while side sleeping should be avoided, as this places torque (twisting force) on the lower thoracic and lumbar spine.

- **Neck pillows.** A pillow that is contoured to fill the spaces under the head and neck can be helpful for people with cervical spine problems. Also called cervical pillows or orthopedic pillows, this type of pillow has a deeper depression where the head lies, and extra support under the neck. People with cervical pain may favor these pillows, as they fill the hollow space created by the neck and help keep the neck in alignment with the spine. Some orthopedic pillows tend to wear out after one or two years and may need replacing.

Use of a variety of pillows for both comfort and support can make a big difference in alleviating or avoiding back pain and getting a good night's

sleep. For people with spinal disorders, the right type of support can be especially important in helping the spine rest comfortably.

For example, most down or feather pillows offer very little structural support compared to pillows filled with firmer materials. People who suffer from moderate or severe spinal disc degeneration, spinal stenosis, myofascial pain, or trauma often seem to experience a more restful night's sleep with a firmer pillow. Pillows filled with grain or buckwheat hulls are often effective for people with any of the above-mentioned conditions.

Click here to read the full article and learn about other pillow types: <http://www.spine-health.com/wellness/sleep/different-types-pillows>

Talk to Dr. Masterman about specific questions related to your SLEEP ISSUES and unique health situation.

**Contact Dr. Masterman
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<http://www.spine-health.com/doctor/chiropractor/michael-masterman-asheville-nc>