

HOW TO CHOOSE THE RIGHT PILLOW

By Dr. John A. Papa, DC, FCCP(C)



A good night's sleep is important for maintaining good health and optimal functioning, and choosing the right pillow can make all the difference in the world when it comes to how well you sleep. Using a pillow that is the wrong size and fit can be a significant source of neck and back pain. In some cases, incorrect head and neck positioning can also affect breathing and cause snoring, which can hinder sleep.

The right pillow will help support the head, neck, and shoulders, keeping them in alignment, and thereby minimize stress and strain on muscles and joints. As a result, this will also create a feeling of comfort and increase the likelihood of a restful sleep.

There is no one best pillow for everyone as there are a variety of factors that go into choosing the right pillow. Below are some useful tips that can help you find the pillow that's right for you:

- **Consider your sleeping position.** *Back sleepers* should choose a pillow that is not too firm or too high. The pillow should keep the chin in a natural resting position, and support the head and neck so they are aligned with the upper back and spine. *Side sleepers* should opt for a firm pillow that supports the neck in a neutral position. The pillow should hold the head high enough to ensure that the spine is aligned. *Stomach sleepers* should choose a soft or flat pillow so the neck isn't turned or tilted at an uncomfortable angle.
- **Choose a size of pillow suitable for your body size or frame.** The pillow should cover the entire back of the neck and mold to one's individual shape to alleviate any pressure points.
- **Try out a variety of pillows.** Most pillows are packaged in a plastic wrapper so you can lay it on a display bed in the store and put your head on it. Visit a store that has a wide range of pillow options to find the one that best meets your needs.
- **A hypoallergenic pillow** is a must if you suffer from allergies, but it is also a good choice for anyone.
- **Replace your pillow every 12-18 months.** Pillows will wear over time by losing their shape and ability to provide proper alignment and support.



If you experience pain and discomfort at night or have difficulty falling asleep, consider visiting a chiropractor. Chiropractors are trained to treat muscle and joint problems that can interfere with a restful night's sleep. They can also offer nutritional and lifestyle advice that can help improve sleep quality. For more information, visit www.nhwc.ca. The author credits the Alberta and Ontario Chiropractic Associations in the preparation of this educational information for use by its members and the public.

This article is a basic summary for educational purposes only. It is not intended, and should not be considered, as a replacement for consultation, diagnosis or treatment by a duly licensed health practitioner.