

## TIPS ON GETTING GOOD SLEEP

**Question:** I don't sleep well. Do you have any suggestions for sleeping better? My mattress is 15 years old -- what do you recommend buying?

**Answer:** An old Chinese proverb states, "Only when one cannot sleep does one know how long the night is." Anyone with occasional insomnia can relate to this.

In fact, surveys have shown that between 40-60% of the general population have trouble sleeping. Daily stress, job and family pressure, aches and pains and uncomfortable beds and pillows all contribute to poor sleep.

Sleep is critical to good health and functioning, so lack of it is a serious matter. "Sleep is one of the most important functions of the brain" says Frederick R. Carrick, D.C., Phd. This is how our bodies and minds recharge for the next day's challenges.

Since doctors of chiropractic do not prescribe medication, we are interested in helping you sleep without the use of sleeping pills. Many people feel hungover in the morning with medication and want to avoid this.

Here are a few helpful tips that may help you sleep:

Exercise regularly. Many people do not expend enough energy through the day. You may not want to exercise at night. This may actually pump you up rather than relax you.

Limit your intake of caffeinated beverages such as coffee, colas and tea. Avoid them altogether late in the day and near bedtime.

Eat an early dinner. It takes at least 2 hours to empty your stomach. Digesting your food may interfere with sleep.

Go to bed the same time each night and get up the same time each morning. This includes weekends if possible. Routine will help you sleep.

Choose the correct mattress. A recent survey revealed that most people find a medium-firm mattress with a pillowtop the most comfortable. It provides support, but is not too rigid.

You should not have any air gaps between your body and your mattress. Turn your mattress clockwise or over every few months to avoid indentations.

If your mattress sags, place plywood underneath your mattress. An egg-carton foam mattress on top (underneath your sheets) may provide added support and comfort. This may extend the use of your current mattress.

Your bed may no longer be comfortable if you gain or lose significant weight.

When you buy a mattress, lay on it for at least 5 minutes to get a good feel. Simply sitting on it is not a good test.

If you have neck and upper back pain upon awakening, you may benefit from an orthopedic pillow. This supports your neck correctly.

If you sleep on your back, you do not want the pillow pushing your head up towards the ceiling. If you are on your side, you want your neck in alignment with your spine.

If these suggestions do not help you sleep better and you continue with aches and pains, see your chiropractor. Many of our patients report sleeping much better because of chiropractic care.

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*Dr. Tom Konicki is a board certified chiropractic orthopedist and has practiced for 17 years in South Dayton. You can reach him at [www.kschiro.com](http://www.kschiro.com) or mail your questions to Ask the Chiropractor, 2165 Miamisburg-Centerville Road, Dayton, Ohio 45459.*