

Choosing a Mattress

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There are three main types of mattresses: core spring mattress, memory foam mattress, and air mattresses.

Core spring mattresses tend to be the least expensive and vary in number of coils and types of fabric covers, padding and stitching. The most expensive beds are not necessarily the best for you. However, as a general rule the cheaper mattresses generally are not as sturdy. Simmons Beautyrest and Sealy Posturepedic mattresses are highly rated by consumers.

Memory foam was developed for our astronauts and is form fitting to your body. They are usually made out of a viscoelastic material and are manufactured by several different companies. The most popular seems to be the Tempurpedic mattress.

Air mattresses are just that. An air mattress is inflated to the desired firmness and usually has a foam or pillow top. The Sleep Number Bed is the most common.

What are the advantages and disadvantages of each?

Core spring mattresses tend to be less expensive and with a nice pillow top are quite comfortable. These can be combined with a

good but less expensive foundation (box springs) to lessen the cost. They are easy to move/rotate to extend the life of the mattress. However, the industry has no standard for the "firmness" of the mattress, so comparison shopping nearly impossible. The most common complaint is sagging (regardless of one's weight).

Memory foam mattresses conform to your body which may cause less pressure points on your body. They usually do not develop sagging and there is limited motion transfer. However, they are expensive, tend to trap heat ("sleeps hot"), and some find it is hard to change positions.

Air mattresses are very adjustable in terms of the firmness desired, they are light weight and there is limited motion transfer. Common complaints are the noise the motor makes to change the levels of firmness and some complain of uneven sleep surface firmness. There has been some question of quality and durability.

So Which One is the Best?

The medical consensus at this time is to look for a "mattress of medium firmness." Patients report good satisfactions with all types. The best way to find out which is best for you is to try them out. Spend at least 20-30 minutes in each bed. The store owners expect this, so don't be afraid to try it out. It is worth taking the time. A good mattress will last for 7 to 10 years.

This information is not intended to diagnose health problems or to take the place of medical advice or care you receive from your physician or other health care professional. If you have persistent health problems, or if you have additional questions, please consult your doctor. If you have questions or need more information about your medication, please speak to your pharmacist. Kaiser Permanente does not endorse any brand names; any similar products may be used. Herbs and supplements are sold over-the-counter. Kaiser Permanente carries only herb categories for which some evidence exists to show that the herbs may be effective to treat certain medical conditions.

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