

bedside buddy

sleep handbook

Keep this by your
bedside to help you
get straight to sleep.



Chiropractic – how can it help me get straight to sleep?

Chiropractic is based on the scientific fact that the human body is a self-regulating, self-healing organism. The chiropractic approach to better health is to locate and help remove interferences to the nervous system that may prohibit achieving an overall state of wellness.

A loss of normal motion or position of the 24 moving bones of the spinal column may irritate or impair the function of the nervous system.

By improving nervous system function, chiropractic may have a positive effect on other areas of health and wellbeing not normally thought of as “back” problems, including sleep disorders. Many chiropractic patients with sleeping difficulties

i Sleep is a vital biological function. It is essential to physical and emotional wellness. No matter what age you are, limited sleep can affect every aspect of your lifestyle – from work to home to personal relationships. When your body works well, you sleep well.

believe they benefit from chiropractic care. In a recent study, one third of 154 patients who completed a research interview reported their sleep pattern was changed immediately after chiropractic care¹.

SPINAL HEALTH AFFECTS YOUR SLEEP QUALITY

Musculoskeletal conditions, such as back pain, neck pain, fibromyalgia and arthritis can adversely affect sleep quality^{2,3,4}. Chiropractors are the spinal health experts and are widely regarded as the practitioners of choice in caring for musculoskeletal conditions, such as back pain^{5,6,7,8,9}.

Further, sleep disorders such as insomnia have been associated with “painful musculoskeletal conditions that may result in sleepiness, irritability, and feelings of misery¹⁰.”

CONSIDER SPEAKING TO YOUR LOCAL CHIROPRACTOR

Chiropractors are highly trained professionals who spend a minimum of five years at university. Not only are chiropractors trained to care for spinal and musculoskeletal problems that can lead to sleeping difficulties, they are also qualified to provide patients with advice on nutrition and ergonomics (including mattress and pillow selection) in order to get straight to sleep.

Through proven, effective care for patients with musculoskeletal problems and specialist advice, chiropractors can help you get straight to sleep and improve your quality of life.

The correct sleeping position — get straight to sleep!

The position your spine is in while you sleep is critical to your spinal health.

The spine naturally curves forwards in the neck, backwards in the mid back and forwards again in the low back. In this position, the spine is relaxed with minimal pressure on nerves, muscles and spinal discs.

SLEEPING ON YOUR STOMACH



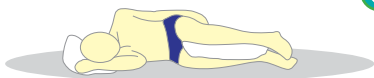
Sleeping on your stomach will eventually create problems with your spine – it puts unnecessary pressure on your neck due to twisting of the head, and also strains your lower back.



SLEEPING ON YOUR SIDE



This is a better position for sleeping.



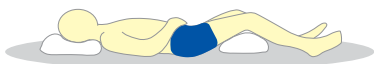
Try lying with your lower leg fairly straight, and bend your upper leg at the hip and knee. Place a pillow between your upper knee and the bed. Alternatively, bend both knees and hips slightly and position a pillow between both knees.

Your pillow should be the right height to keep the neck straight. It should mould to the shape of your head.

SLEEPING ON YOUR BACK



This can also be a good position for sleeping.



It is often useful to place a pillow under your knees. This may help reduce strain on the lower back.

Your pillow will need to maintain the forward curve of the neck. If you have a fairly straight back, then you should use a thinner pillow than someone with rounded shoulders.

i Some of the major disasters in history have been attributed to sleep deprivation. The 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill off Alaska, the Challenger space shuttle disaster and the Chernobyl nuclear accident have all been linked to human errors where sleep deprivation played a role¹¹.

FOOTNOTES/REFERENCES FOR THIS HANDBOOK

Visit www.chiropractors.asn.au for a full list of references.

Choosing a mattress and pillow

For many Australians, the underlying cause for poor sleep is literally right under them! Improving your sleep quality can be as simple as sleeping on a better mattress. According to a recent study in the *Journal of Chiropractic Medicine*¹², compared to mattresses five years old or older, a new mattress provided sleepers with significant improvements including:

- 70.8% in sleep comfort
- 62.0% in sleep quality
- 55.3% in back pain
- 50.7% in spine stiffness

We spend a third of our lives in bed, so choosing the correct mattress and pillow is vital for getting straight to sleep.

MATTRESSES

How do I know it's time to get a new mattress?

- Every five to seven years – manufacturers and chiropractors recommend replacing mattresses over this period.
- When sagging starts happening – saggy spots in a mattress result in people tensing their muscles to compensate for the uneven surface.
- When annoying peaks, dips or lumps show in the surface.
- When you experience lifestyle changes such as weight loss or gain, or a change in sleeping partners.
- If you are waking up sore with stiffness, aches or pains, it's probably time to replace your mattress.

i Over 1.2 million Australians experience sleep disorders¹³.

What should I look for in a mattress?

Research has shown that medium-firm mattresses reduce back pain, shoulder

pain, spine stiffness and improve sleep quality¹⁴.

For people suffering from spinal health related conditions such as chronic low-back pain, it has been asserted that firm should remain the "first choice of patients¹⁵."

How can I look after my mattress?

Turn your mattress every few months so that body indentations are kept to a minimum. Body weight can impact on mattresses, resulting in dips, peaks and an uneven surface. Refer to your bedding manufacturer's advice for further information on mattress care.

PILLOWS

Pillows are often given little thought, but are extremely important in getting straight to sleep.

How do I know it's time for a new pillow?

- As soon as your pillow becomes "squishy".
- If you tend to fold your pillow in half for extra padding.
- If your pillow looks flat and lumpy, or the inside foam has become powdery and brittle.

What should I look for in a pillow?

There is no such thing as a 'one size fits all' for pillows, so make sure you try, try, try before you buy! However, there are some important things to look out for when shopping.

- A pillow should have enough give to allow your head to mould into it. If it doesn't, it's probably too firm and could result in neck pain. If your head sinks to the bottom, it's probably too soft, and could result in strains and sprains of neck joints, ligaments and muscles.
- Pillows should support the space between your head and shoulders. Your head and neck should remain level with your mid and lower spine.
- In many cases, you get what you pay for. While many ergonomic pillows on the market may seem expensive, they are more likely to provide long term spinal health benefits.

If you need further advice on a new mattress and pillow, speak to your local chiropractor.

i Sleep disorders, such as insomnia, can have damaging effects on home life. Research has shown that insomnia patients report decreased enjoyment of relationships, are less likely to help their children with homework, and tend to avoid exercise in favour of TV¹⁶.

i Insomnia patients receive fewer pay raises, and are less optimistic about future career opportunities¹⁷.

i Poor sleep is not just a problem for adults. Adolescents and young adults are at risk of poor academic performance, mood swings and increased car crashes as a result of excessive sleepiness¹⁸.

i In a survey of Australian university students it was noted that the most common sleep complaints were difficulty falling asleep (18%), early morning awakening (13%), general sleep difficulties (12%), and difficulty staying asleep (9%)¹⁹.

Sleep Assessment Checklist

The more boxes you tick, the more issues you may be having with your sleep.

A) SLEEP ENVIRONMENT & ERGONOMICS

- I have a TV or computer in my bedroom
- I use more than two pillows to support my head in bed
- I wake up with pain and stiffness in my back or neck
- I sleep on my stomach
- My mattress is more than seven years old
- My pillow is more than two years old
- I place my hand under my pillow in bed for support
- I suffer from back pain or neck pain throughout the day
- I do not bend my knees when making the bed

B) LIFESTYLE FACTORS

- I have high blood pressure
- I am overweight
- I exercise less than three times a week
- I drink over 2 cups of coffee a day and drink coffee at night
- I drink alcohol before bedtime
- I regularly bring work home and work late
- Friends and family say that I am grumpy or easily irritable
- I regularly fall asleep outside of my bedroom (e.g. the lounge)
- I spend a lot of time in front of the TV or computer

C) SLEEP SPECIFIC

- I have been told that I snore
- I often wake at night and have trouble falling asleep again
- A lot of thoughts run through my head before bedtime
- I take more than 30 minutes to fall asleep
- I wake up feeling tired and unrefreshed
- I regularly get less than 7-8 hours sleep a night
- I sweat a lot during sleep
- I wake up gasping for breath during the night
- I fall asleep during the day

If you have ticked many of the above, you may:

- a) Suffer from poor sleep quality due to inadequate spinal support from your mattress and pillow; existing musculoskeletal complaints such as back pain; incorrect

sleeping posture or incorrect lifting procedures.

- b) Want to consider changing some lifestyle habits preventing you from getting straight to sleep. For specialist advice on nutrition on exercise, consult your local chiropractor.
- c) Suffer from a sleep disorder such as insomnia, sleep apnoea or narcolepsy.

Did you know sleep experts recommend getting eight hours of sleep per night?

Use this sleep diary to record your sleeping times and habits. Once completed, you could discuss this with your chiropractor.

- a) Upon waking, record the times you fell asleep and awoke each day.

	M	T	W	T	F	S	S
FELL ASLEEP							
WOKE UP							
TOTAL HOURS							

- b) Tick or cross the boxes for each criteria when waking up each morning.

	M	T	W	T	F	S	S
WOKE REFRESHED, LIGHT & MOBILE							
WOKE GENTLY							
WENT TO SLEEP EASILY ON MY SIDE							
NECK & HEAD FELT SUPPORTED IN BED							
FELL ASLEEP IN BED IN MY BEDROOM							

Partner feedback (if applicable). Does your partner ever comment on your sleeping (e.g. noise, movement, temperature)? What do they say?

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Tips for quality sleep

- Ensure you have a comfortable, supportive mattress and pillow. Speak to your local chiropractor for specialist advice on choosing the right mattress and pillow for long term spinal health.
- Adopt a healthy posture in bed. Don't sleep on your stomach! Lying on your side and back are the best sleeping positions.
- Establish a sleep schedule. Track your current sleep pattern using the sleep diary included in this bedside buddy.
- Reduce your caffeine intake – avoid it 4 to 6 hours before bed.
- Use the bedroom for sleeping only – 24 hour accessibility of TVs and computers can disrupt normal sleeping patterns.
- Avoid alcohol before bedtime, as it can cause you to wake up during the night.
- Exercise at least 30 minutes a day, but avoid high intensity physical exercise just before bedtime. If exercising in the evening, try to do so at least 2-3 hours before going to sleep.
- Relax before bedtime. Try to forget about work and paying the bills before bedtime!

For further tips on quality sleep and any other related information, speak to your local chiropractor or contact the Chiropractors' Association of Australia.

WWW.CHIROPRACTORS.ASN.AU

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