

# **The Gift of a Great Night's Rest**

## **Why Your Mattress may be Your Most Important Gift to Yourself**

**By: Dr. Brandon Crouch**

To truly determine how important your mattress is we first need to establish how often you use it? Let's break it down together. We know that an average human lifespan is around 75 years. If you then consider that the recommended amount of sleep is 8 hours per night that's exactly one third of every day. So if you sleep one third of every day that means you spend approximately 1/3 of your entire life span or around 25 years in bed!

When you spend a third of your life sleeping the most important component of a good night of rest is your mattress. In addition, many neck and back complaints can be traced right back to your sleep and your mattress. A study published in 2006 in the Journal of Chiropractic Medicine reported that sleeping on a new mattress can greatly reduce stiffness and pain in the back. Those who entered the study with existing back pain reported a 63% improvement with a new mattress. So how do you find a good mattress? In this article I want to discuss some important aspects to consider when picking out a perfect mattress for you.

The most difficult aspect of choosing a mattress is that there is no "one size fits all" or magic chart that will help you pick out the perfect mattress. Instead, here are some guidelines as recommended by the ACA (American Chiropractic Association) that will help direct you toward the mattress of your dreams.

### **Support**

Be sure to look for a mattress that provides support from the head to toe. Every part of your body should be touching the mattress. Often if a mattress is too firm you can have gaps (such as the lower back) that do not allow the entire body to rest comfortably on the bed. This can cause added stress or pressure to the lumbar spine resulting in low back pain.

Also be aware that if the bed is too firm it may irritate trigger points within the muscle tissue that cause you to toss and turn. The mattress should be firm enough to allow your spine to stay in a neutral position from head to toe and have enough cushion to provide for a comfortable rest.

In a study following 313 adults who were randomly given either a medium-firm or a firm mattress results showed that the individuals who slept on the medium-firm mattress reported less back pain in bed and reduced back pain upon rising than those who slept on a firm mattress. The study indicated that a medium-firm mattress provided a better balance of good support and comfort versus the firm mattress.

When looking for a mattress it the number and placement of coils in the mattress that determines the level of support while the amount of padding in the mattress determines the cushion and comfort. If your current mattress is too firm and buying a new mattress is not in your budget, consider softening it up with a mattress topper. These usually come in a varying thickness (1 to 3 inches) and can be found at mattress stores or major retailers.

### **Comfort**

One of your top criteria of a mattress should be comfort. When looking for a mattress shop at a store that has many choices. Since this is not a decision to take lightly allow for an all day shopping excursion. (This is not the time to run over on your lunch break to pick out what you will be sleeping on the next 5 – 10 years.) When shopping, lay on each one you're interested in for a minimum of five to ten minutes to get a good idea of its comfort level. If you cannot find a comfortable position you are probably on the wrong mattress.

You also want to find a bed that minimizes the transference of movement. In other words, you do not want to feel the motion of the bed every time your partner moves or gets in or out of bed.

### **Size**

How much room do you need? You need to have enough room for both you and your sleeping partner to stretch and roll over. A lack of space can also lead you to feel more of the movements made by your partner.

### **Mattress Life Expectancy**

Although there is no specific time frame for a mattress, in general a mattress will last approximately 5 to 8 years based on the wear. If you have had some significant life change such as change in weight, injury, medical condition, etc. this may warrant the need for a change in mattress.

Some mattress companies even provide a warranty that will extend up to 20 years. Be sure every few months to rotate your mattress clockwise, or upside down, so that body indentations are minimized. Another good idea is to rotate the mattress frame every so often to reduce wear and tear.

### **“There’s No Place Like Home”**

There is no place like home when it comes to trying out a mattress. Lying on a mattress for 10 minutes in a store is much different than 8 hours during the night. What might feel great in the store may be a disaster for your body at home. This is why you should always, always, always seek to buy from a mattress company or retailer that has a “try out” trial period with either a return policy or exchange policy.

Don't let another year go by without getting a great night of rest. Remember that you spend one third of your life sleeping and nothing is more important to your health than quality sleep. Give yourself the gift of a great mattress and your body will thank you.

About the Author:  
Brandon Crouch, D.C.

Dr. Brandon Crouch is a Chiropractor with Crouch Family Chiropractic ([www.crouchfamilychiro.com](http://www.crouchfamilychiro.com)) and a Certified Golf Fitness Instructor through the Titleist Performance Institute. ([www.mytpi.com](http://www.mytpi.com)) Dr. Crouch can be reached for comments or questions at 270-842-1955 or via email at: [crouchfamilychiro@hotmail.com](mailto:crouchfamilychiro@hotmail.com).