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EC63-1173 Guide for Buying...Mattress and Springs

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GUIDE for BUYING

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Mattress and Springs

by Magdelene Pfister
Extension Specialist in Home Furnishings

When you buy a mattress and springs you are investing in sleep, comfort and health.

If you are an average American you have been sleeping on your present mattress for 12 years. Most mattresses and springs are guaranteed for only 10 years against structural defects.

Here are some tests which may help you decide if you need replacement.

--Examine the mattress for loose or missing tufts, and sagging edges.

--Press the mattress lightly. A mattress in good condition should give easily when pressed, then rebound quickly when your hand is removed.

--Place a yardstick across the mattress. Is the mattress level and free from lumps and sags?

--Press the bedsprings. They should give under pressure and spring back into shape when released.

--Check springs for leaning coils and broken spring connections.

--Do you wake up feeling tired in spite of adequate hours of sleep?

Because you can't see what is inside the mattress, it may be hard to be sure you are buying a good one.

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UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE
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COOPERATING
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A well known brand may mean nothing. The same company which makes an excellent mattress may also make a cheap, poor quality one. There are many different construction details which vary with the manufacturer. Although the number of coils is often advertised, this isn't the only guide to quality. There are seldom "bargains" in mattresses; you usually get what you pay for. It is important to deal with a reliable dealer.

SOME CONSIDERATIONS AS YOU SHOP

Tell the sales person what kind of mattress you've been sleeping on so that if you want a firmer or softer foundation, he'll be able to judge what to show you.

If convenient, lie down on the mattresses before making your selection. Just sitting on them or punching them will not test them for sleeping comfort.

Have the difference between materials, construction and comfort details among the various brands and price lines explained.

Find out about the warranty on the mattress you buy. Firms now usually rebuild any defects and prorate the cost as the tire and appliance manufacturers do.

DETERMINE YOUR NEEDS

Firmness

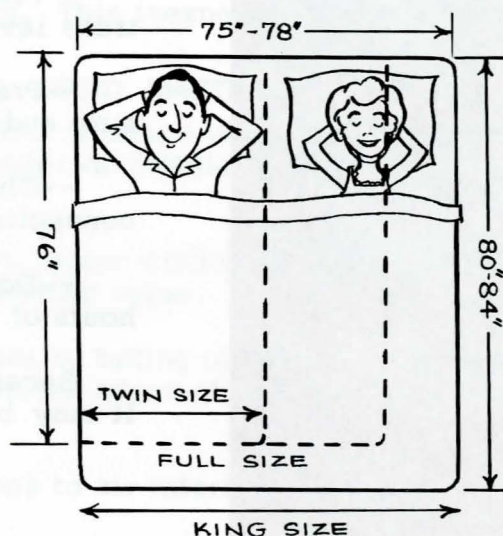
Children need very firm foundations to assure proper skeletal growth. For a normal adult the degree of softness or firmness in a mattress is a matter of preference, with a trend toward firmer foundations at present. Heavy persons usually prefer a firmer foundation than a lightweight person. If you have a special problem, consult your doctor about orthopedic mattresses.

Size

Tests show that the average sleeper subconsciously changes position 20 - 45 times a night in order to give each group of muscles a chance to relax. Sleeping space for each person should be 39" wide for freedom of movement. The width of a standard double bed mattress is 54", allowing only 27" per person if the bed is occupied by two people. Twin beds with a single headboard may be a better arrangement.

A mattress should be at least 6 inches longer than the person using it. Standard mattresses are 76" long. Persons over 5 feet 10 inches tall will rest more comfortably on an extra length mattress. Because people are growing taller, super size bedding, once available only on custom order, is now found in most stores. Usual sizes are:

--King	75"-78" x 80"-84"
--Queen	60"-61" x 80"-83"
--Long twin	39" x 80"-84"
--Long double	54" x 80"-81"



Several bedding producers have developed bed stretchers, or convertible rail devices to allow the use of larger bedding, principally the 60 x 80 inch queen size on your old bedstead.

Bunk mattress and spring combinations are now made by a number of manufacturers. These are combination units used on bunks or trundle beds. The mattress is an inner-spring attached to a framed spring unit. The mattress can be fitted with a contour sheet.

TYPE AND CONSTRUCTION OF MATTRESSES

Basically, mattresses are of two types: (1) Innerspring coil springs covered with padding, and (2) solid mattresses made of rubber, polyurethane foam, or cotton. There are varying qualities in each.

Innerspring Mattresses

These are most popular because they build up resistance in proportion to weight. The degree of firmness depends upon the kind of steel used, the design of the coils and how they are joined, rather than the number of coils.

Coils may be fastened together with metal ties or clips or with small coils with connecting wires (helicals). Coils also may be individually encased in cloth pockets which are sewed or held together in some way.

There are more coils in the cloth pocketed type than the wire tied type, but they are smaller and of lighter weight wire.

Over the coils is a layer of protective insulative material made of metal mesh, bands, wires, burlap quilted pads or sisal to keep the padding from working down into the coil.

Solid Mattresses

These are generally rubber (latex) or polyurethane foam, although cotton or hair may be available.

Rubber Mattresses

These are made from natural or synthetic latex which has been whipped into a foam and baked. They contain many air cells, making the mattress self-ventilating, cool, fresh, and odorless. Mattresses of rubber are lightweight, free from dust and lint, and resistant to matting. Foam never needs turning. Persons with heart trouble or allergies may find these a wise choice.

Compression standards for latex foam mattresses have been established. The firmness depends upon density and is measured by the pounds of pressure required to compress the core to 25 percent.

Medium requires 19 - 24 lbs., firm 25 - 30 lbs., and extra firm 31 - 37 lbs. Firmer mattresses are more expensive and last longer.

Most rubber mattresses are thinner than are innersprings and require a higher box spring unit. Many have molded channels from top to bottom with a solid layer on top. There is a pin core type without channels which is cheaper to make.

The cover of a good foam mattress will be stitched to a tape which is cemented to the core.

There is also a combination innerspring latex mattress.

Polyurethane Mattresses

These have many properties of the more expensive latex. However, they are less resilient and lighter in weight. Choose one of higher density and fairly heavy weight for better support and so that it will not shift easily.

Cotton Mattresses

Good quality cotton mattresses are made of felted long staple fibers. This type of mattress should be turned once a week and needs frequent airing. (In time it will lump or mat.)

TYPES OF SPRINGS

Springs are the foundation for the mattress. The type you choose will affect the wearing quality of the mattress and contribute to your comfort and support.

When buying a new mattress buy the spring designed for it. There is much variation in size and placement of springs. For an innerspring make sure that the coils of the mattress match the placement of the coil in the box spring. For a foam mattress the coils should be extra strong and closely spaced to compensate for the mattress' lack of rigidity. Box spring coils should generally be deeper for foam mattresses.

Box Springs

These are probably your best choice. They consist of coil springs, insulation material and padding covered with ticking and supported by a box-like frame. Coils should be tied to each other, to the base and to the bands with twine, metal clips or small helical springs. Box springs should have reinforced borders. Frames of better box springs are of spruce rather than pine and are screwed and doweled together.

Metal Coil

Coil springs are less durable and less expensive than box springs. They should be braced to prevent sagging and side sway. The double deck type is preferable to the single deck. The lower, more tightly wound, type supports the weight while the upper half contributes resilience.

A platform top, which consists of metal bands running lengthwise and/or crosswise, provides a semi-closed surface which can be used for either a solid or innerspring mattress.

Using an innerspring mattress on an open coil type spring may cause the mattress to break down.

Flat or link springs may be made of metal bands or woven wire attached to the frame by helicals and may be strengthened horizontally. This inexpensive type is mostly used for cots and bunk beds. It tends to sag.

CHARACTERISTICS OF A GOOD MATTRESS

1. Resilient and buoyant. Gives readily when pressure is applied but springs back to original shape. Holds body comfortably without letting it sink too far into the mattress.
2. Has closely woven, sturdy cover. Eight ounce ticking or damask desirable. A fancy covering may raise the cost without increasing value.
3. Well tailored. Padding held firmly in place by tufting or other means. Reinforced borders keep edges erect and neat. Tape sewn around edges of high quality; rolled edges on medium quality.
4. Innerspring has at least four ventilations to air interior.
5. Handle for turning innerspring firmly attached.
6. Made of new material.
7. Carries a written guarantee telling how long materials and workmanship should last.