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EC 63-1174 Guide for Buying...Bed Pillows

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GUIDE for BUYING

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BED PILLOWS

by Magdelene Pfister
Extension Specialist in Home Furnishings

Homemakers today are offered many choices in pillows. There are various fillings and coverings from which to choose. You need to understand the characteristics and properties of each in order to make a selection which meets your personal requirements. Softness or firmness, cost, resiliency and size are all considerations. The final selection must be a personal one. Pillows need replacement just as does other bedding. Ten years is considered the maximum life of a pillow. Filling materials often lose their buoyancy under wear and sometimes before the cover wears out.

FILLINGS

Fillings are of these types:

- (1) Down and feathers
- (2) Foam
- (3) Fiber fill

Most states have laws requiring a label identifying the filling material. Feather pillows vary in desirability, depending upon the fowl from which the feathers were taken, with water fowl generally most desirable. Both natural and synthetic rubber and foam can vary greatly in quality. The following chart presents information about most fillings and coverings available.

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COVERINGS

Feather and down pillows require closely woven covers to keep the filling from working out. An unsized 8 ounce cotton twill ticking is satisfactory.

Covers for other fillings should be of fabrics that will keep dust from entering. If nylon or acetate is used it should be heavy weight since lighter weights tend to fray and pull out at the seams. Welted or corded seams are found on better pillows.

The following considerations will help you decide on a bed pillow:

1. Is it light weight? Of two pillows of the same size and filling and plumpness, the lighter one will usually be better. Standard size pillows average the following:

down - 1 1/2 pounds

dacron - 1 1/2 pounds

goose feathers - 2 1/2 pounds

chicken feathers - 3 1/2 pounds

2. Is it suitable? Pillows both larger and smaller than the standard size 21" x 27" are available. Be sure that your pillow cases fit the pillow you choose.

3. Is it resilient? Notice the rebound when pressure is released.

4. Is it buoyant? It should not droop when held flat on extended hand. Do you like the way it supports your head?



5. Does it have a durable, attractive covering?

6. Is it free from dust and odor?

7. Is it free from lumps, stiff feathers and pieces of quill?

8. Is it plump? The filling should not settle more than one or two inches when the pillow is shaken from the end.

9. Is the price right? Price can be an indication of quality.

PILLOW FILLINGS

Type	Characteristics	Other Comments
<u>Down</u>	Soft fluff from under feathers of ducks or geese. Softest filling used. Luxurious. May work through cover.	Must be fluffed periodically. White goose down considered the finest. Difficult to determine good quality.
<u>Down & Feathers</u>	Half and half mixture of down and feathers produces a firmer, more resilient pillow.	Better wearing pillow than all down. Less expensive.
<u>Feathers</u>		
Goose Feathers	Buoyant, springy, durable, moisture resistant.	Water fowl feathers by nature warmer and dryer.
Duck Feathers	Less buoyant and springy than goose feathers.	Water fowl feathers are by nature warmer and dryer.
Turkey Feathers	Contain large amounts of large fluffy fiber, but are less desirable than duck or goose feathers.	
Chicken Feathers	Lack resilience and may have harsh quills.	Least desirable of feathers. Inexpensive.
Tan-O-Quill	Properties like down - less expensive. Non-allergic, lofty, resilient, odorless. Machine washable.	Process developed by U. S. Quartermaster Corp. Chicken feathers chemically treated.
Crushed Duck & Chicken Feathers	Soft, moisture resistant. Resilient.	Crushing improves softness.
Feather Fiber	Lower quality feathers, usually used.	All quills removed.
Stripped Feathers	Lower quality feathers, usually used.	Process incomplete with some quills remaining.

Type	Characteristics	Other Comments
<u>Foam</u>		
Latex	Retains shape. Long wearing. Non-allergic. Lightweight. Resilient. Dustless	Cannot be washed as it retains moisture.
Polyurethane	Dustless, odorless, cool, lightweight. Resilient. Hand washable. Will not stiffen or crumble. Will not mildew. Less buoyant than rubber.	Does not retain moisture. Discolors when exposed to light. Lighter than foam latex.
<u>Fibers</u>		
Kapok	Odorless. Moisture resistant. Non-allergic.	Tends to mat - breaks down to dusty powder. Excellent inexpensive filling. Other uses are life preservers, decorative pillows.
Polyester - Fortrel Dacron Kodel Vycron	Soft, resilient, odorless. Lightweight. Mildew resistant. Lint free. Non-allergic.	The properties of this man-made fiber approximately resemble those of down.
Acilan Acrylic	Non-allergic. Odorless. Mildew resistant.	Not as expensive a fiber as polyester. Has same properties as polyester.