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Selecting a Comfortable Mattress

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Utah State University EXTENSION

Smart Shopping for Home Furnishings

Selecting a Comfortable Mattress

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A mattress is one of the most important pieces of furniture you purchase because you spend one-third of your life in bed sleeping, and the quality of that sleep determines how effectively you function during the day. You should select the highest-quality mattress that fits into your budget. Before deciding which type of mattress to purchase, there are two general questions you should be able to answer.

- WHAT MATTRESS SIZE DO I NEED?
- HOW DO I TEST A MATTRESS?

WHAT MATTRESS SIZE DO I NEED?

The size of mattress you need is determined by the size and number of people who sleep on the mattress, the size of bedroom, and the furnishings used in your bedroom. Your new mattress should be at least 6 inches longer than the tallest person sleeping on the bed. The width of the bed should allow space for your pillow and enough room to put your elbows in back of your head without touching your partner or going beyond the edge of the mattress (see Figure 7.1, Mattress Size for Comfort). If you are a restless sleeper, you will need more width than if you are a quiet sleeper. For comfort, it is wiser to purchase a larger mattress, if you have a choice. Use Figure 5.2, Basic Mattress Sizes, for mattress lengths and widths to help you decide which size mattress you need.

Figure 7.1. Mattress Size for Comfort

Another important consideration is the size of your bedroom and the number and size of other furnishings in your room. The easiest way to determine if the size mattress you want to purchase will fit into your bedroom is to measure the width and length of your bedroom. Put your bedroom measurements onto a piece of graph paper. A good size graph paper contains ¼-inch squares, each square equaling one foot. Make your bedroom furniture cutouts and planned bed size the same scale as the graph paper and place them into your bedroom drawing. For the mattress to fit into the room, allow twenty-two inches clearance at the sides of the mattress so you can

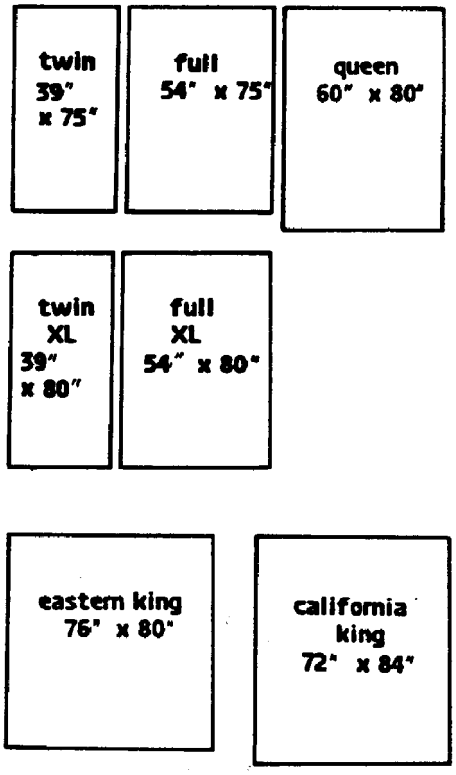

Figure 7.2. Basic Mattress Sizes

make your bed. If one side of the mattress is pushed up against the wall, the bed should be mounted on castors for easy movement.

Remember that you cannot move a waterbed. If the room size requires that you have the waterbed close to the wall, you will need at least 12 inches between the wall and bed in order to make the bed.

HOW DO I TEST A MATTRESS?

When you go into the mattress store, lie on the mattress to see how it feels. If two people are going to sleep together, both should lie on the mattress at the same time. Is it comfortable or uncomfortable? Is it too soft or too hard? A mattress should feel comfortable to both people.

The way a mattress feels depends on whether it is an innerspring, foam, air, or water mattress. A good quality innerspring mattress does not conform to the whole body, but provides support at the hips, shoulders, head, and feet. A high-quality innerspring mattress has firmer support in the center and softer support at the head and feet. A good quality foam mattress conforms a little more to the body than an innerspring mattress even when denser foam is used in the center area of the mattress. Air and water mattresses conform more to the whole body than innerspring and foam mattresses, depending on the amount of air and water in the mattress.

Test the mattress using some of your most frequently used sleeping positions. During a normal night of sleeping, you may change sleeping positions 40 times. Roll onto both sides as well as onto your back and stomach to see how the mattress feels.

Some of the manufacturers of higher quality mattresses offer you a 60-night free trial. You can take the mattress and box springs home and try them out. If you determine that the mattress is uncomfortable to sleep on, return it to the dealer. This does not mean that you get your money back. Rather, it means that the dealer provides you with another mattress. The reason manufacturers offer this service is that it is difficult for the consumer to tell in the store whether the mattress gives the proper support.

Do not make the mistake of buying too firm a mattress. Once you get that firm mattress home, you may not be able to get a good night’s sleep. Comfort as well as firmness should be considered.

If you have a bad back, the correct mattress support can give you a good night’s rest. When you sleep, you want to maintain the natural S curve of your spine, assuming that you have good posture. If your mattress is too soft, your back arch may be distorted and you may wake up with a backache. This problem can be solved by purchasing a mattress with the right comfort.

Do not choose the most inexpensive mattress for your children. You should buy the highest quality mattress that you can afford. A quality mattress provides the proper rest for children, which also affect physical development and performance in school.

Possible Choices

You can select from many choices when purchasing a new mattress. The most familiar choices are the air, foam, innerspring, and water mattresses.

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