British Chiropractic Association

Sleep Easy with the British Chiropractic Association

Most of us enjoy a lie-in, but research from the British Chiropractic Association (BCA) shows that doing just that can bring on back pain.

Extensive research carried out by the BCA has placed sleeping and mattresses as one of the top triggers of back pain, with over a quarter of sufferers blaming their beds. 27% of women and 24% of men said that their pain was brought on during a night's 'rest'.

Back pain can be debilitating, but even on a lesser scale it can prevent individuals carrying out day-to-day activities that most of us take for granted, and sleeping is top of the list.

Tim Hutchful, a chiropractor from the British Chiropractic Association says:
"Sleep is essential to maintain our body's natural rhythm, but too much can play havoc with our spines. When you are lying still your back stiffens and is more prone to injury when you get up. One of the common misconceptions is that if you are suffering from back pain the best cure is bed rest – that is not the case, bed rest can actually slow your recovery."

Follow these top tips from the British Chiropractic Association to ensure you can sleep soundly and safely:

- Your bed shouldn't be too hard or too soft. If you are lying on your side your spine should be parallel to the mattress and the mattress should not sag (bed too soft) or bow (bed too hard). Your pillow should be an extension of this i.e. your neck should be a continuation of the straight spine (not too high not too low).

- Hard mattresses are not always best – opt for firm but supportive. It is easier to make a hard mattress soft than a soft mattress hard, so if you your mattress is too hard – add an extra blanket or duvet to give yourself a softer surface to lie on.

- Try and adopt a sleeping position which creates less physical stress on the back (e.g. lying on your side is better than lying on your front with your neck twisted to one side!).

- Keep moving and avoid being in any one position for too long (no matter how comfy the position initially; the longer you stay in one position the more this will "load joints"). If your partner moves around a lot at nights try separate beds!! Your partner's movement could aggravate YOUR back condition!

- Drink water and keep well hydrated (dehydration can make muscles ache).

- Remember to turn your mattress regularly this should be done at least every couple of months and will keep your bed in good condition.

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- Do not leap out of bed first thing in the morning, take a minute to wake up and try some gentle stretches, such as drawing your knees to your chest or swaying your knees side to side (only do these things if they are comfortable).

- Wake up your body - Once up avoid bending or doing anything sudden or strenuous until you back wakes up!

- Take your own - if sleeping away from your own bed – take your pillow! Your neck is used to your own pillow and won't have to adjust as much.

- When buying a bed, narrow your choice down to two or three and then spend plenty of time lying on these in your normal sleeping positions. Five or ten minutes should be the minimum for each bed - but feel free to spend half an hour, if that's what you want to do.

- If you are a back pain sufferer, a bigger bed will be of benefit for you and for your partner. Zip and link beds are a good option if firmness preferences differ widely.

- Pay attention also to choosing the correct pillow, which must support the neck in alignment with the rest of the spine. Having too many pillows on your bed may thrust the head forward or sideways (depending on your sleeping position); too few may cause the head to tip backwards: both can create a crick in the neck.

Chiropractors treat problems with your joints, bones and muscles, and the effects they have on your nervous system. Working on all the joints of your body, concentrating particularly on the spine, they use their hands to make gentle, specific adjustments (the chiropractic word for manipulation) to improve the efficiency of your nervous system and release your body's natural healing ability. Chiropractic does not involve the use of any drugs or surgery.
The information here is guidance and you should consult a BCA chiropractor or other healthcare professional for further specific advice if you are experiencing pain, have an existing injury or other medical condition.

For more information or to find a BCA chiropractor in your area:

The British Chiropractic Association
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Website: ***www.chiropractic-uk.co.uk***

Like medical practitioners and dentists, all chiropractors are registered by law. Members of the British Chiropractic Association (BCA) are registered with the UK regulator, the General Chiropractic Council and the association only accepts members who have graduated from an internationally recognised college of chiropractic education after a minimum of four years full-time training. The BCA promotes high standards of conduct, practice, education and training.

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