



## Chronic Pain and Women's Health Newsletter

### How To Get a Good Night's Sleep



Difficulty sleeping is a common problem with most of the patients I see. If you aren't sleeping properly, you not only don't get rested but you don't feel well. After several nights of poor sleep, it is common to have increased aches and pains. Your body doesn't get a chance to repair itself of the normal daily wear-and-tear it sustains, let alone heal itself from injury or muscle damage.

Sometimes, as with a back or shoulder injury, the pain may make it more difficult to get to sleep or may wake you when you move. Other types of problems such as fibromyalgia may allow you to sleep but it is not a restful, rejuvenating sleep. Sometimes you may do further damage to yourself while sleeping such as with TMJ (jaw pain) with clenching and grinding of the teeth. Even your bladder may be too active and cause you to wake multiple times to go to the bathroom.

No matter who you are, a good night's sleep is very important. It is even more important if you have a condition such as fibromyalgia or an injury that needs to repair in the sleep "downtime".

While some things that

affect sleep require more in depth evaluation and treatment, there are some ways you can help improve your quality of sleep. This issue of the newsletter is designed to give you information, tips, and ideas of how to get more quality shut eye. It will also help answer one of the most common questions I am asked- *What type of mattress or pillow should I get?*

*\*\*\*If you have severe pain that wakes you and won't let you get back to sleep, especially if it is accompanied by fatigue, weight changes, or nausea, make sure to see your physician. You may have a more serious problem.*

### Fibromyalgia, Back/Neck Pain, TMJ-Jaw Pain and Sleep

Fibromyalgia is condition with all-over body pain and fatigue. One of the most common problems with fibromyalgia is difficulty getting restful, restorative sleep. Normally, the body

repairs itself from daily wear-and-tear and injury during the deep-sleep cycles. While people with fibromyalgia often sleep a lot of hours, they don't get the quality sleep required

to feel rested and rejuvenated.

Low back or neck pain often makes it difficult to get quality sleep. Often the

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The Sleep Issue

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#### Coming Soon!

- ⊙ Info on Women's Health Issues
- ⊙ Tips and Tricks
- ⊙ Info on special topics such as fibromyalgia, TMJ jaw pain, headaches, pelvic pain
- ⊙ Your Questions Answered
- ⊙ And More!
- ⊙ Marnie Clemens 2008

# Fibromyalgia, Back/Neck Pain, TMJ cont...

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damaged muscles or joints make it difficult to find a comfortable position or you wake when you turn over.

TMJ-Jaw pain, more appropriately referred to as temporomandibular joint dysfunction(TMD), is a debilitating pain in the neck and jaw. Often, people who have TMD overuse the jaw muscles and joint. This happens not only in the daytime, but also at night when they are not aware of it. Stress can lead to clenching and grinding of the teeth at night, causing a lot of pain.

Lack of quality sleep is known to increase muscle related pain. The good news is that 8 hours of restorative sleep often reverses this tendency. More is not better however. Over 8 hours of sleep is likely to cause more fatigue.

Research shows exercise to be beneficial and cost effective with few side effects or risks. The Cochrane database systematically reviews quality research articles. Exercise is recommended for treating fibromyalgia, headaches, and low back pain. It also helps improve the ability and quality of sleep

The grinding and clenching of TMD can often be successfully helped by addressing daily stress and wearing a nighttime dental splint (see your dentist) to allow for proper resting of the joint.

For musculoskeletal pain, such as back or neck pain, it is very important to get positioned correctly for a good nights sleep. See the information in this newsletter on how to pick the best pillows and mattresses for your individual needs.

In general, the best overall position for sleeping is on your back with a small pillow under your knees and little to no pillow under your head. This allows for the most neutral spinal



## How to get a better nights sleep if you have pain

position with no compression at the hips or shoulders.

The second best position for sleeping is on your side, but correct positioning is even more important. A body pillow is useful between your knees and arms to keep your hips and shoulders even. In this position, you need even more thickness in a pillow to keep your neck in a neutral position.

Side-lying can be a very difficult position for people with shoulder pain as it places a lot of pressure on this area. Try sleeping with the sore shoulder on top and a body or other pillow underneath to keep the pressure off of the shoulder joint.

For some back or sacroiliac (at the dimples above your tailbone) pain, the only comfortable position is on your back with the knees bent up very far and propped with a large pillow. Sometimes the only comfortable option when the pain is severe is to sleep in a recliner. This is not a good long-term solution, but may help you get some sleep during the initial injury process.

## Self Help for Shut Eye: Benefits of Exercise, Muscle Relaxation, and Breathing

Exercise is beneficial in so many ways. It helps us stay fit, loose weight, feel better, and stay healthy. One way it helps is by improving sleep. Exercise improves sleep depth, the amount of slow wave sleep, and growth hormone release which helps our body repair itself. This is especially important for people with all-over body pain and fatigue such as fibromyalgia. For the purpose of sleep it is best to get a moderate amount of exercise on a daily basis. Try for 30 minutes a day of brisk

walking.

Muscle tightness caused by daily activity can lead to discomfort and difficulty getting to sleep and staying asleep. Muscle relaxation and stretching can help loosen up tight, overused muscles. You can also use heat to help relax (just DON'T fall asleep with it-you risk burning yourself!), or take a nice hot bath or shower before bed.

All of us experience stress as a daily occurrence. If we don't deal

well with this stress, it affects our sleep. One of the best ways to combat this effect is deep breathing. It allows us to "reset" our body to a more restful state. This allows us to get to sleep longer, sleep deeper, and wake less.

All of these things are great ways you can help yourself sleep better. See your physical therapist if you need help or to tailor what you do to your physical limitations.

## Tips and Tricks: Get a better night's sleep

\*Choose the best mattress and pillow for your individual needs

\*Limit fluids 2 hours before bedtime—this alone will stop nighttime bathroom trips in up to 50% of people

\*Don't drink caffeinated beverages (coffee, tea, soda) up to 6 hours before bedtime

\*Keep the environment comfortable, even a little on the cool side.

\*Don't use the bedroom for anything besides sleep and sex

\*Try to keep a set bedtime and wake time with at least 7 hours in between

\*Limit bright lights and TV/computer time before bed

\*Don't do intense exercise a few hours before bed

\*Do get regular daily exercise



\*Take a warm bath or shower prior to bed

\*Try breathing exercises before bed

to help boost serotonin, one of the relaxation hormones.

\*For worrywarts, write a list of all the things you have to remember before you go to bed so that your brain can "shut off"

\*Eat a small balanced snack before bedtime (milk is great)

\*TMJ sufferers may benefit from a night splint to prevent grinding (see your dentist)

\*Don't forget, 8 hours of shut eye has been shown to help you loose weight (too little will cause you to gain).

## How to Pick the Best Pillow or Mattress for YOU

Maybe it's all those commercials promising the ultimate nights sleep, or just the great difficulty most people have getting comfortable enough to sleep well. Whatever the reason, one most common questions I get asked is "what is the best pillow/mattress".

Everyone is looking for that magic solution to help them get some shut-eye. Unfortunately there is no ONE solution. The best option for one person may be terrible for another. You can't even ask your friends. What works for them may not suit your needs.

So what's a person to do?

On the following pages is a listing of different options in pillows and mattresses, the benefits and drawbacks of each, and the best suggestions for specific conditions. The items in blue, based on reports from many patients over the years, come the closest to being the best overall option for a variety of conditions.

Pillows come in a variety of options and are not overly expensive.

**Is there a magic pillow or mattress?**

You may have an easier time trying several types to find the one that suits you best. Mattresses, however, are expensive and you may not find out you don't like one until after you have already spent the money. Try to find one with an in-home trial period if you are worried about this or at least take a long test "nap" in the store.

For couples, the most difficult problem will be that each of you is likely to have very different mattress needs. You may need to compromise or pick a mattress with adjustable firmness on either side. For those who cannot afford a new mattress, the toppers can be a good option for more comfort at less price.

As for the old-time recommendation to put a board under your bed to cure your aches and pains? This may help if you have a very old mattress that sags in spots, otherwise this often doesn't help or is very uncomfortable.

A good night's sleep helps so much with your well-being that it is worth it to try to pick the best pillows and mattresses for your needs. While a high price does not necessarily mean the item is what YOU need, getting the right one is worth spending some time and maybe even some money to get what you need. Physical therapists are experts at posture and body aches and pains. If you have any problems, see your PT to get the best recommendation for you and great tips and tricks to work around painful areas or problems you may have.

While a new pillow or mattress may not solve all of your sleep problems, it can help you get a better night's sleep.

# PILLOW CHART

most recommended in blue

	PRICE	DESCRIPTION	POSITIVES	NEGATIVES	WATCH FOR	BEST FOR
REGULAR PILLOW	\$	Most familiar type of pillow, usually filled with batting	Cheap and easy to find. Washable	Tends to be too thick, .Same thickness throughout. Difficult to use with position changes	Not too full, not to flat	Price conscious
DOWN PILLOW	\$	Pillow filled with real or "fake" feathers	Easy to find, "scrunches" to fit under head and neck for better fit for position changes	Some people allergic to feathers. Does not hold shape very well. Difficult to wash	Avoid over stuffed versions. May need allergy pillow cover	Price conscious
MEMORY FOAM/ CONTOUR PILLOW	\$\$	Pillow made of a temperature and pressure sensitive foam. May have curved areas in front and back.	Head and neck able to sink into the pillow for a more personalized fit. Contour version has neck support	Some can be too hard or too soft to be comfortable. Some people are sensitive to "chemical" smell. Not washable	Can vary in softness or hardness. Should be soft enough to let your head sink in but not so hard as to push uncomfortably into your neck	One of the best overall pillows for any person, especially if in a contoured version.
MICROBEAD SQUISHY OR BUCKWHEAT PILLOW	\$\$-\$	Pillow filled with small beads or hulls	Able to contour to fit your head and neck dimensions	Requires a special pillowcase (usually comes with it). Has some "noise" due to the beads or hulls moving around (especially for buckwheat). Not washable	Don't get too large or small. Not good for back sleepers	Good choice for most side sleepers as it conforms to your position
WATER PILLOW	\$\$	Pillow with a batting filled top and a water filled bottom	Contours to fit head and neck. Water is very cool and may help if you sleep "hot" (such as with menopause)	Can be too cold. Water movement makes noise. Very heavy compared to other pillows	Consider the weight of this pillow with the water in it.	Menopausal women with hot flashes at night
MOLDED PILLOW	\$\$\$	Dense foam pillow with cut outs contoured to head and shoulder positions typical of back and side sleepers	Very specifically molded for separate positions of back and side sleeping. Often rated the most comfortable pillow by people with neck pain	If you don't LOVE it you are likely to HATE it. High price if you end up not liking it. May take an adjustment period to get used to it. Not washable	You must be measured for the correct size and fit	People who spend time sleeping on both back and side, very good for some people with neck pain
BODY PILLOW	\$\$-\$	Large, long fluffy pillow	Designed to curl around in a side sleeping position Very useful for correct positioning for side sleepers.	Takes up room on your bed. Requires a specially fitted pillowcase.	Get large and long enough for your body. Can often find cheaper versions at certain times of the year (such as back-to-school time)	Recommended for everyone, especially side sleepers to align arms and legs correctly
KNEE PILLOW	\$\$-\$	Hourglass shaped pillow for between your knees	Helps position your knees in side sleeping position	Tends to fall out from position during the night	Use a large regular or body pillow instead	
PREGNANCY PILLOW	\$\$\$	Very large U shaped pillow to support entire body in side sleeping	Great for comfortable sleeping during pregnancy but also good for side sleepers in general	Very large pillow. Takes up space with a "wall" of pillow between you and your partner. High price.	Get the right size for you.	Pregnant women or side sleepers
TRAVEL PILLOW	\$	Small C-curved pillow for travel	Good for head support in the car or plane.	Extra item to carry for travel	Get the right size for you, not too small or too large	Traveling, especially if you tend to fall asleep in the car

# MATTRESS CHART

most recommended in blue

	PRICE	DESCRIPTION	POSITIVE	NEGATIVE	WATCH FOR	BEST FOR
<b>REGULAR MATTRESS</b>	\$-\$\$\$	Typical mattress	Easy to find. Can find some bargain prices. Best option if you like a very firm mattress	Uncomfortable for a lot of people, especially those with joint pain or curves	Enough support and quality construction	Cheapest option. Smaller sized people with less curves  ** can add a topper for more comfort. Cheaper option to purchasing a new mattress- see toppers below
<b>PILLOWTOP MATTRESS</b>	\$\$-\$\$\$	Mattress with a pillowed batting-filled top	Popular option that allows for some softness and contouring to body while retaining firmness underneath	Not enough softness for many larger people or those with joint pain	The quality of the pillow top varies. Choose the right one for your comfort level	People who want some softness on top with a firm mattress underneath
<b>MEMORY FOAM MATTRESS</b> (see also memory foam topper)	\$\$-\$\$\$	Temperature and heat reactive foam	Conforms to your body shape with support where you need it. Allows for improved body circulation compared to a regular mattress	VERY heavy mattress. Some people are sensitive to the "chemical" smell. Absorbs fluids. (can put water resistant cover on mattress but this will affect the comfort of it)	Get the right density for your level of comfort	Most people find this type comfortable and it relieves pressure areas in all sleeping positions
<b>AIR MATTRESS/ WATER MATTRESS</b>	\$-\$\$\$	Blow up mattress (such as a camp mattress), or a water-filled mattress.	Air version cheap and easy to obtain. Useful for travel. Both allow for the body to sink into the mattress. The water mattress can have a heater for warmth.	Tends to pull out body heat (put something between you and it) If two people are in it, you will experience the "valley effect" and roll towards the middle. The air version may deflate and wake you. Water mattress very heavy.	Quality construction	Air mattress: Travel. Cheaper option for someone who needs some pressure relief while sleeping.  Water Mattress: people who need a warm sleeping condition (use heater)
<b>ADJUSTABLE MATTRESS</b>	\$\$	Mattress that bends to achieve sitting up position	Adjusts to allow seated position.	Mattress not as supportive or comfortable as it has to be able to bend up.		Recommend sitting in a regular chair or getting a sturdy hospital bed for watching TV.
<b>VARIABLE SUPPORT MATTRESS</b> (ie Sleep Number)	\$\$\$\$	Mattress with adjustable air chambers, often dual chambers for customization of firmness	Often commented as "the most comfortable bed" ever slept in. Adjusts firmness or softness to each individual's preference	Expensive	Choose the best option for you. Make sure to get dual chambers if you need different levels of firmness on each side.	Couples who can't agree on firmness or softness (i.e. most of you out there!)
<b>MEMORY FOAM TOPPER</b>	\$-\$\$	Temperature and heat reactive foam mattress topper	Great option to add more comfort and pressure relief to your current mattress for less expense than a new mattress	Can be heavy. Absorbs liquid (can use a water-proof mattress cover but this will affect the comfort)	Comes in variable thicknesses and densities. Choose the best for you	Great, low cost option for anyone to upgrade current mattress for more comfort
<b>DOWN OR WOOL TOPPER</b>	\$-\$\$	Feather or wool-filled mattress topper	Option to add more comfort and pressure relief to your current mattress for less expense than a new mattress. Natural eco-friendly product	Absorbs liquid	Tailor thickness to your needs"	People with fibromyalgia and arthritis. Anyone with chemical sensitivities or desire for more eco-friendly product



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**Helping People Who Hurt**



## Chronic Pain and Women's Health Newsletter

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The content of this newsletter is provided for informational purposes only and is not intended to diagnose or suggest treatment for individuals. Please see your health care provider regarding your specific needs.

Fibromyalgia  
Chronic Pain  
Headaches  
Bladder Control  
Pelvic Pain  
TMJ (Jaw Pain)  
Osteoporosis  
Biofeedback  
Tai Chi, Pilates, Yoga  
Manual Therapy