

***COPN: Proudly Celebrating our 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary*****Buying a Mattress when you have Osteoporosis****In this issue**

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**Fracture**

**Fact:** Lack of sleep can reduce alertness during the daytime which may increase the risk of falls and fractures.

A mattress may be one of the most challenging purchases you will make. Since it is something you want to last for quite a long time, making a decision can be difficult. If you have been diagnosed with osteoporosis or have fractured, you may wonder if this should be taken into consideration when you select a mattress. However, there is no mattress designed specifically for people with osteoporosis and no type of mattress is thought to be better than any other type. One of the reasons for this is that ultimately, personal preference plays a huge role in what you decide to purchase. What one person finds comfortable may feel like a bed of nails to someone else. In this article we hope to give you some general guidelines to make the process of buying a mattress a little easier.

**When Should I Buy a New Mattress?**

You should think about buying a new mattress if you wake up tired or achy, you toss and turn at night and cannot find a comfortable position, you tend to sleep better when you are away from home, your mattress looks saggy or lumpy, if you and your sleeping partner roll into one another during the night, or if your mattress is at least seven to ten years old. Most of us probably don't change our mattress that frequently, but a recent study at Oklahoma State University suggests perhaps we should. The study compared a set of sleep outcomes for participants sleeping on their old beds (average age 9.5 years) to the same outcomes when sleeping on brand new beds and found significant improvement in sleep quality, comfort and efficiency, as well as significant reductions in back pain and stiffness. People tend to replace cars, appliances and running shoes more frequently than beds. Because mattresses gradually age as we do, we often blame increases in stiffness and pain on our aging rather than the mattress. As a result, too few people consider the possible benefit of a new mattress.

**What Kind of Mattress Should I Buy?**

**SIZE:** Your answer to this question will depend in part on whether you sleep with a partner or alone. If you sleep with a partner, make sure that both of you are involved in the mattress selection process. First of all, consider size. Even if you sleep alone, you probably shift positions during the night, and will want a mattress that is wide enough to allow you to move freely. Standard mattress dimensions are 193x203cm (76x80 inches) for a king, 152x203cm (60x80 inches) for a queen, 135x190cm (53x75 inches) for a double, and 97x190cm (38x75 inches) for a twin. If you are thinking of upsizing your bed, be sure to take measurements of the room, and the ceiling height, doors, hallways and corners leading to the room. The new bed or mattress needs to fit not only in the room, but also on its way to the room. The same holds true for any new piece of furniture. Remember to leave plenty of room on both sides of the bed so you can get in and out easily and safely.

**TYPE:** The two most common types of mattress are the innerspring mattress, which has a steel coil inner support system, or memory foam, with an all-foam support core. A conventional innerspring mattress is the most common choice and often the least expensive. Memory foam is temperature sensitive and shapes itself to your body. Not all memory foam feels the same, and it can take time to get used to it. There is no consensus as to which type of mattress is “better.” Some people prefer the firmness and bounce of a spring mattress, and others may prefer the feel of a foam mattress as it “cradles” the body. If you switch from one to the other it will take time to adjust. Before deciding on whether to buy a spring or foam mattress, spend at least 20 minutes testing out each one. Remember to consider the height of the fully assembled bed. If it is too high or too low it may be difficult to get in and out safely and easily.

**DEGREE OF FIRMNESS:** It is important to choose the right firmness. Don't go by the names; there are many of them - extra firm, ultra firm, firm; plush, cushion and luxury firm – and different companies may use different names to refer to what is essentially the same product. One company's ultra plush might be another's super soft. You may think that if you have osteoporosis, you should sleep on an extremely firm mattress for maximum support, but firmness and support are not necessarily the same thing, and determining the best surface is, in the end, subjective.

If you suffer from lower back pain you may benefit from a medium-firm mattress. If the mattress is too firm, it will not support your body evenly and may cause discomfort at the heaviest points (hips and shoulders). If it is too soft, you may sink into the surface and have a hard time moving. The best mattress supports the spine at all points while helping it to maintain its natural curve.

### **Where is the Best Place to Buy a Mattress?**

Do not buy a mattress online or over the phone, unless you've already tried the identical mattress in a store. Anecdotal evidence suggests that customers who buy online are more likely to return their mattresses than shoppers who buy in a store. This makes sense, because in the end the only way to tell if a mattress works for you is to try it out. Don't hesitate to lie down on lots of mattresses in the store. Salespeople expect it. Wear loose clothes and shoes that you can slip off. Spend at least five minutes on each side and on your back or stomach, if that's how you like to sleep. When you do make a decision, be sure to check the store's return policy. Do they give you enough time to try out the mattress (30 days, for example) and do you have to pay a fee if you return it? Will they deliver the new mattress and take away your old one? Even a twin size mattress is heavy and unwieldy and could be difficult to carry up and down stairs and around corners (this should not be done by someone with osteoporosis or spinal fractures). Is there a warranty and what are the terms? If you shop at a store that specializes in mattresses and bedding, you may find the salespeople are more knowledgeable.

### **A Few Other Considerations**

**BOX SPRING:** If your old box spring has bouncy springs instead of stiff wire, it should be replaced. If your current box spring is only a few years old and is still structurally sound with no damage or "give," consider using it with a new mattress. It won't matter that it is a different brand or colour as long as it is the same size as the mattress.

**PILLOWS:** If you sleep on your back, a pillow under the knees will keep the knees flexed and relieve tension in the spine. If you are a side sleeper, put a pillow lengthwise between your legs so that it is between both your knees and your ankles. Doing this will keep the legs and pelvis level, prevent the hips from twisting and slipping, and help to keep the spine in proper alignment. You can also try using a body pillow. This is a large pillow, generally about 136 cm (54 inches) long – that gives you added support while you sleep. If you're a side sleeper you can position it along the front of your body and cuddle against it or lay it along behind you so you can lean into it to support your back. However you use it, this kind of pillow can provide just enough extra support so your muscles relax and you get a good night's sleep. If you have allergies you may wish to consider buying hypoallergenic pillows.

**MATTRESS PADS:** If you would like to improve the quality of your sleep but are not in a position to purchase a new mattress at this time, consider a mattress pad (also called a mattress topper). This ranges from a thin padded protective sheet to thicker slabs that are almost like a small mattress themselves. A mattress pad is great for providing extra cushion to a firm mattress. The style, thickness and size of a mattress pad will depend on both your bed and your personal sleeping habits.

**BED SHEETS:** Now that you have purchased that new mattress, you may like some new bed sheets to go with it. If you have osteoporosis, have had a spine fracture, or suffer from back pain, consider purchasing silky satin or cotton sateen bed sheets and silky or satin sleepwear. These fabrics reduce friction and may help you move around in the bed and get into and out of bed a little more easily.

There are many benefits to getting a good night's sleep: improved memory, a healthier weight, lower blood pressure, less depression, less stress and a stronger immune system. If buying a new mattress could lead to that good night's sleep, we hope these ideas will help, but it's not a decision to be rushed. Shop around and check out Consumer Reports at [www.consumerreports.org/cro/mattress/buying-guide.htm](http://www.consumerreports.org/cro/mattress/buying-guide.htm). Get recommendations from friends and relatives; but remember that in the end, only you can decide which mattress is best for you. We, at Osteoporosis Canada, wish you a restful sleep, as you take one step closer to living well with osteoporosis.

## FUNNY BONE:

A bicycle can't stand on its own because it is two-tired.

## A Recipe from our Sponsor

### Oatmeal Porridge with Almonds and Cherries



Course: *Main Dishes*      Preparation Time: *10 mins*

Cooking Time: *15 mins*      Yields: *4 servings*  
*1/2 milk product serving(s) per person*

#### Ingredients

2 cups (500 mL) **milk**  
1 1/4 cup (300 mL) water  
1/4 tsp (1 mL) ground cinnamon  
1 1/3 cup (325 mL) quick cooking oatmeal  
1/3 cup (75 mL) dried cherries or cranberries, chopped  
1/4 cup (60 mL) roasted almonds, chopped  
Added **milk**, optional

## Preparation

**Stove Top:** In a saucepan, combine milk, water and cinnamon. Bring to a boil over medium high heat, stirring often. Gradually add oatmeal and cherries. Reduce heat and let simmer, stirring often, until the oatmeal is tender – about 3-5 minutes.

**Microwave:** In a large microwavable bowl, mix together milk, water, cinnamon, oatmeal and cherries. Cook on high, 4-5 minutes, stirring once. Once cooked, remove porridge from heat or microwave oven, cover and let stand 5 minutes. Sprinkle with the almonds and add more milk to taste.

**For more information about this recipe:**

<http://www.dairygoodness.ca/getenough/recipes/oatmeal-porridge-with-almonds-and-cherries/>

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