

I have seen many different kinds of back supports, cushions, mattresses and chairs advertised for sale.

Are any of these effective at preventing or curing back pain?

If you have back pain, a good nights sleep is very important, as it will leave you refreshed in the morning and better able to deal with your back pain.

Many people believe that a firm mattress is better for relieving or preventing low back pain. However, this may not always be the case as was recently demonstrated in a clinical study comparing three different types of mattress/bed – a waterbed, a 'memory foam' mattress and a firm mattress. In this study, the waterbed and the 'memory foam' mattress were found to improve sleep and back pain more effectively than the firm mattress. Also, regardless of which mattress type was used, people who slept better also reported less pain and better mobility in their backs.

Ideally, your mattress should be soft enough to support and conform to your body shape yet firm enough to allow you to turn from side to side easily, without twisting your back. The best way to check if a mattress or bed is suitable for you is to try it out properly (for at least 10 minutes – or, if possible, get a home trial). Lie down flat on your back and slide your hand between the mattress and the small of your back. If you can slide your hand through easily but it stays in contact with both the mattress and your back, your back will be in what is known as a 'neutral' position and the bed is probably the right one for you. A large gap between your back and the mattress means the bed is too hard. No gap at all means the bed is too soft.