

# How to improve your sleeping and sitting comfort without having to buy expensive devices.



# Laying positions

Get a good night rest and wake up recovered and energized with less pain

Getting a good night of rest is an essential part of a healthy and active lifestyle. At night time, our body and brain has the opportunity to recover and process all the activity of the day. Having good sleep habits allows us to recharge and optimize our body and brain for the new challenges of the day. Often we are restless when sleeping for a variety of reasons. Some of the reasons may be related to mental or emotional stress, and some of it can be from physical discomfort. The bed you are sleeping on is not likely to fit your body perfectly, but you can use these ideas to customize your bed to fit your body. This works great when you are away from home too, that way you can always make the bed fit your body better. These supported sleep positions will help your body rest in a relaxed position to let your muscles recover and your brain to calm down.

## Back Sleeping

If you prefer to sleep on your back, realize that the small of your back is not supported fully. Our body is designed to have an arch at our low back, and when laying on our back at night time, that arch is constantly getting pulled on by gravity. Your muscles on the front of your back need to stay slightly active so that the arch doesn't collapse due to the pull of gravity. This means they don't fully turn off and recover. We can support that arch however by placing a FOLDED towel under the

small of your back. Notice that it is folded, not rolled. A rolled towel will create a point for that arch to bend over, which we want to avoid. This folded towel should be anywhere from 3-5 inches wide, and 0.5-2 inches thick. Then length just needs to get from one side of your body to the other.



Folded towel under the back and pillow.

Your neck has a similar arch in it, which we usually can support with a pillow. Make sure the pillow is pulled to the tops of your shoulders, not under your shoulders. Because of the neck arch, many people find a need for a pillow that is thicker under the neck. You can use the same folded towel idea to place underneath the pillow, making the neck area thicker and more supportive.



Pillow to your butt bones, not just under the knees.

Also, while laying on your back, the weight of your legs is pulling downward, which causes the arch of your back to increase. Place a pillow underneath your legs and all the way up to your butt bones, but not under your butt bones. You want to create support of the whole limb so no areas are hanging in open space. You will find

the best comfort if you use a second pillow underneath your lower legs also, with your heels hanging over the edge so they have no pressure on the bed.



Set yourself up like this before you lay on your back.

## Side Sleeping

If you are a side sleeper, you can use some of the same concepts as the back sleeper. When laying on your side, your rib cage and your hips are bony, hard, and supportive, compared to your waist which is soft and unsupported. This area between your rib cage and hips needs extra support to maintain that arch, which is constantly getting pulled on by gravity. You can use the same folded towel to support this area, which will keep your spine from sagging, and allow your muscles to turn off and your brain to calm down. Without this area being supported, the pull of gravity fatigues your muscles which are trying to prevent that arch from collapsing. As those muscles get tired, they need a break. You toss and turn to the other side so that the opposite side muscles can now work while the tired side now relaxes. You spend your night shifting from side to side because your muscles are taking turns supporting the arch. If you are able to fill in that unsupported waist area, your muscles will turn off,



your brain will calm down, and you will sleep in one position without getting uncomfortable from muscle fatigue.



Folded towel between your rib cage and hips.

Your neck also needs extra support, as your shoulders are much wider than your head. You may need a second pillow or a folded pillow to provide enough support depending on your body. Your pillow should be pulled to your shoulder, not under it. You can also use a folded towel under the pillow to provide a thicker and more supported area under your neck.

Most people know to put a pillow between their legs. However, most people put it between their knees, and this is not enough support. Pull that pillow all the way up to your groin, so the proximal part of the thigh is supported. This will take tension out of your hip and low back, which was being created by the constant downward pull of gravity.

## Belly Sleeping

If you prefer to sleep on your stomach, you need to be aware of the strain this may have on your neck due to prolonged positioning in a rotated position. If you choose to sleep on your stomach, you may need to support under your belly with a pillow if you are a slender person. You don't want to be sleeping in a backward bent position for the whole night. Also, if you prefer to sleep on your stomach but are limited due to

back pain, you may find that having two, three, or even four pillows under your stomach allows you to rest without irritating your back. The pillows should be under your stomach, and not under your hips or thighs.



Pillow under your shins, to your knees, not under.

Your thighs will be well supported in contact with the bed, but your shins will not. Place a pillow under your shins up to your knees, but not under your knees. This will take some tension out of your legs and back.

## Half Belly, Half Side Sleeping

If you like the half belly, half side position, you can take a bit from each of the other positions to make it work for you. Try a folded towel under the waist to support that area. Same for underneath your pillow, if needed, to support your neck. If you sleep with one leg forward, place a pillow, or maybe two, under your top leg. Remember to pull the pillow all



Pull the arm pillow to the armpit, and the leg pillow to the groin.

the way to the groin, so that your proximal thigh is supported. If you have neck or shoulder pain, try a pillow under your top arm, and pull it tight into your armpit to get that proximal support.

## Sitting Positions

Sitting can be another position that takes its toll on us throughout the day. Staying in one position for prolonged periods can cause pain, stiffness, weakness, and fatigue. When we sit for prolonged durations, our trunk muscles have to work to keep us from toppling over. They are not resting because we are sitting, even if our back is supported. The best thing to do, is to get up and move.

Human bodies are designed to move, yet we sit an excessive amount in our lifetime. Sometimes you have the freedom to get up and move, but sometimes you are confined to a space, especially when traveling. If you are riding in a car, bus, train, or airplane, you can use a towel to support yourself better. It is highly unlikely that the chair you are sitting in actually fits you. You can use this to customize that chair to your own body and liking. All it takes is a bath or beach towel.

Fold your towel in half, and half again, or try to trifold it. You want to have a towel as tall as your trunk (pelvis to shoulder blades), with extra length coming out of each side. Roll the sides in so you have two pillars to support your back. You want the pillars to fit into the space where your rib cage comes away from the back of the chair. You are creating these pillars to help control your side to side movement. Normally, your trunk muscles are staying active to stop you from falling side to side. Placing these lateral pillars makes the effort less, allowing your back to relax. After a long ride with the towel pillars supporting your back, you will

notice that you are less tired and uncomfortable than if you hadn't used it.

After you arrive at your destination, get up and move. Walking is great for general back discomfort and overall stiffness. If you are not at a place you can walk, try some light repeated motions. This can be anything from placing your hands on your hips and bending backwards, standing up and sitting down, or squatting. If you are in a place you can lay down, try laying on your stomach if tolerated. This will get you out of the flexed position you've been sitting in for too long.



Create lateral pillars to support your back.