

XXII. Choosing a Mattress for Back Pain and/or Sciatica

Finding a comfortable mattress is a very personal choice, but here are some guidelines:

1. The base of the mattress should be firm enough to support your spine in a straight position (spine should be in an S-curve as opposed to a C-curve).
2. The mattress does not allow sagging. See photos to compare: supine straight and supine sagging, side lying straight and side lying saggy, prone straight and prone saggy.
3. The upper layer of the mattress should be comfortable and conforming, reducing the pressure at the contact points.
4. Medium-firm mattresses have been found to be better for back pain than firm mattresses.
5. If you are a smaller person with less prominent curves, you will likely be able to tolerate a moderately firm foundation mattress with a firmer top. You won't sink into the mattress easily because of your size and because you have less prominent curves you can tolerate a firmer top.
6. If you are a heavier person with prominent curves you will likely require a firm foundation mattress with a less firm top. You will likely sink into the mattress easily because of your size and because you have prominent curves you will benefit from a less firm top.