

BACK TO BED

You might not think you can accomplish much while you are asleep, but when it comes to the health of your spine, sleeping in the correct posture is like earning extra credit without putting in the work.

Assuming you are getting 8 hours of sleep per night, then you are averaging one-third of your day in bed, so it can have an astounding impact on your health.

It might seem strange to consider that there is a right way and a wrong way to sleep, but for the healthiest spine and the best complement to your adjustments there are definite pointers to keep in mind when it comes to finding the correct sleeping position.

In general, proper sleeping postures are meant to support the spine's natural shape – straight up and down when viewed from the back, and with three sweeping curves as seen from the side.

Implement the following simple tips for a healthier night's sleep.

ON YOUR BACK:

Sleeping on your back offers great support for the spine and can eliminate some of the twisting forces to the joints produced by other positions. When on your back, use a cervical roll under the base of your neck to support the neck's natural forward curvature. This will also serve to relax the

muscles in the back of your neck and relieve pressure from the discs.

If you are experiencing lower back pain, elevate your knees with some pillows and/or use a small lumbar support under the lower back.

ON YOUR SIDE:

When on your side use a thick enough pillow to fill the gap between your shoulder and head. This will prevent your head from tilting down toward the mattress all night,

which can result in nerve pressure and muscle strain. Also, remember to keep your neck neutral; avoid curling your chin down to your chest in the fetal position.

To ease lower back pain when sleeping on your side, sleep with a pillow between your knees. This can help to minimize twisting to the lumbar spine and pelvis which could result in tight muscles.

Sleeping on your stomach is not recommended. Stomach sleeping places tension on neck muscles and can irritate the joints in the lumbar spine, especially on a softer mattress. If you are a stomach sleeper, try to gradually transition to sleeping on your side, and then if possible, progress to sleeping on your back at least part of the time.

Often times you will find that as the nervous system is brought back into balance and the tension on the spine is released, side sleeping and back sleeping will become more comfortable.