

Choosing the Right Pillow?

If you suffer from head and neck pain or headaches it can be a good idea to invest in a decent pillow, but which one? There are thousands out there these days each purporting to be the best value or latest design.

1) Memory Foam:

A closed cell foam that distorts to the contours of your body and in theory shapes to support the individual's neck. These come in a range of profiles and heights and vary from about £15 to £100.

A general rule of thumb is that the cheaper pillows are not real memory foam and will not retain their shape, similarly the more expensive brands are really trading off their marketing and a mid-priced offer probably represents the best value. I would suggest that £50 is probably a reasonable price to pay. Though the best value pillow is always the one that works for you.

Key features:

Depth: The depth of the pillow from the bed surface is key. Many find memory pillows uncomfortably high. I would suggest a height of 2-3 inches is optimal, as you can always boost a thinner pillow up.

Ridges or Contours: If you have an arthritic neck then a lip of an inch or two can give vital support, though you must remember that people move in bed and a very marked step may be unbearable if you roll onto your front.

Downsides: the closed cell foam of memory foam pillows is not breathable and compared with feathers or loose foam, some people find this unbearable in hot weather.

2) Feather

Goose or duck feathers make good pillows, like everything else they don't last forever. If you have family heirloom pillows it may be best to replace them.

Features:

A moderately sized feather pillow can be shaped to the contours of your neck you can adjust it in your sleep, in a way you can't with memory foam. As they are natural they breathe well in hot weather.

As natural products they can trap dust, do not wash well and can trigger allergy problems.

3) Synthetic pillows

Usually made of polyester or foam pieces, they are easy to wash and less attractive to pests than natural fibres. They can be rapidly adjusted but can be sweaty.

4) Wool

Modern wool pillows claim to be breathable and warm, they can be adjusted by the addition or removal of wool to alter the firmness. Some are treated so they can be washed. They are natural and totally biodegradable.

Try before you buy: The benefit of purchasing a pillow from your local Osteopath is they may offer a limited try before you buy service which will enable you to see if that particular model is suited to your needs. **Stick with it:** Any change to your sleeping routine takes a while to get used to and so I would suggest that you try to adapt to the pillow for about four weeks, obviously if it makes your condition significantly worse then, do not use it. (Don't throw your pillow out, as you may find that as your condition changes over time the pillow becomes more suitable).