

# How Should I Sleep?

Most of us are in bed for about 6 to 8 hours every night. So even though you're not awake for all of it, the way you sleep can have a big impact on your body! Here are the best and worst ways to sleep, particularly for your spine! There isn't much research on the topic, so this advice is based on clinical experience. If you have a problem or condition that prevents you from sleeping certain ways, let your chiropractor know and they may have suggestions for how to modify the position to make it work better for you. Remember this advice is general and may not work for your body.

## The Good

### 1. On your Side

Sleep on your side with a medium to thick pillow under your head, and a thin pillow between your knees. Keep your knees together and not bent up too high. This keeps your spine straight and in a neutral position, and the pillow between the knees keeps your hips even.



### 2. On your Back

Sleep on your back with a thin or medium height pillow under your head, and a thin pillow beneath your knees. This takes pressure off your neck and low back, keeping your spine in a neutral position. If this is still causing pain in your low back, some people prefer to place a small rolled up towel in the small of their low back, with or without the pillow under the knees.



## The Bad

### On your Stomach

This position is bad for both your neck and your low back. As you sleep with your neck turned, this places significant stress on the joints and muscles of your neck – stretching some while compressing others. Your low back is put in an 'extended' position (the curve is increased), which also places extra stress on the joints in the low back.



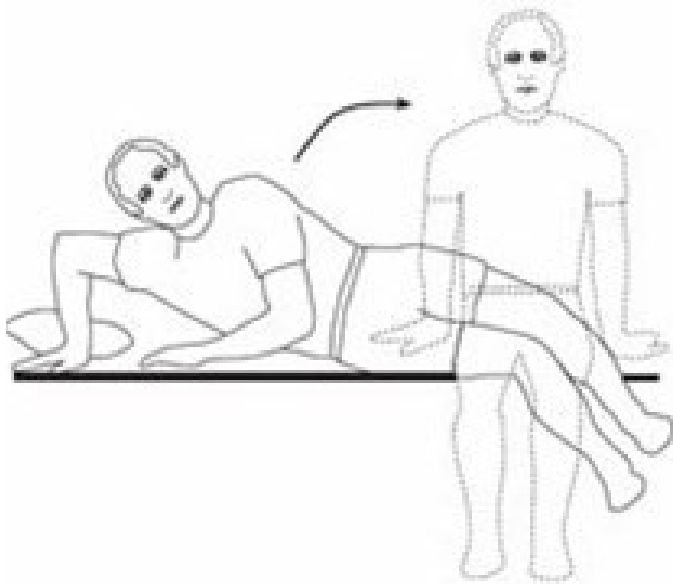
## Also Avoid

1. Sleeping with one arm under your pillow or head. This will cause a 'dead arm' by compressing nerves and reducing blood flow to your arm. You may be awoken by a numb or painful arm. If you feel the need to sleep like this, it may indicate you need a pillow that is thicker or has more support.

2. Sleeping in a 'fencer stance' on your side, where one leg is straight and the other is bent. This often causes you to roll forward until you are half on your stomach. This can place increased stress on your neck, your low back, and your pelvis which is then twisted.

## Getting Out Of Bed

If you have trouble getting out of bed due to discomfort or pain, try this technique which keeps your spine neutral and uses your arms and legs to help you get up.



1. Roll onto your side and bend your knees.
2. Swing your legs over the edge of the bed, placing your feet on the floor as you push yourself with both arms to sit.
3. Scoot to the very edge of the bed, and ensure your feet are under your buttocks.
4. Stand up while keeping your back straight, using your legs to straighten up.

It can take some time for your body to adjust to a new way of sleeping, so you might feel uncomfortable at first. But keep at it, and your body will thank you! If you have trouble getting to sleep, consider what things you might be doing (or not doing) that make it harder for you to fall asleep. Exercising and getting some sunlight every day are simple things that will help you sleep better and feel better when you're awake too!