Is Your Mattress Harming Your Health? 3 Questions to Ask

How can you tell if you are getting good sleep? You wonder why you're yawning all day, especially when you got eight hours of sleep. You don't understand why your hips and knees hurt when you wake up — it's not like you've been moving a lot. Maybe you have had chronic pain or illness, and doctors are unable to explain the cause.

Believe it or not, the answer could be surprisingly simple: it could be your mattress.

Did you know we should be changing our mattresses every five to 10 years? Yet, most people still sleep on a mattress that's old enough to vote. They deal with poor-[quality sleep, chronic pain, and daytime drowsiness, and they often misdiagnose the problem. We look to all kinds of other reasons — and some of them may be applicable — before we consider something as simple, yet impactful, as a comfortable, healthy night's sleep.

How Do Mattresses Affect Our Health?
We sleep on mattresses almost our entire lives. From mattresses cribs, cradles, and bassinets for infants to king-sized beds for adults, we spend almost 10,000 days — nearly 25 years — asleep in bed. When you look at sleep from this perspective, it becomes obvious why a good mattress is important. Laying down at night on an old, worn-out mattress is a recipe for chronic back pain, limited ability to manage and handle stress, increased allergies, a surge in joint pain, more night sweats, and a rise in neck pain. All of these situations can keep you up at night or limit the amount of deep, good-quality sleep you get. When that happens, your body is less able to recover from injury, fight off illnesses, and manage anxiety.

What Can I Do with My Old Mattress?

Once you have your new mattress in place, you now have a queen or even king-sized problem to deal with: responsibly disposing of your current mattress. You have several options that will easily keep your mattress out of the landfill. For instance, you can use it in a spare room as a guest bed or donate it to a thrift store for a family in need. However, if your mattress is really old or worn down, consider recycling it. Most people are unaware, but nearly 80 percent of a mattress is recyclable, from the metal springs to the wooden frames — even the cotton fabric can be reused. Making sure your mattress doesn't wind up sitting stagnant in a landfill is good for the environment and the economy.

How Do I Care for My Mattress?

Caring for a mattress requires regular maintenance, but it's not as hard as it may initially sound. Keep dust mites from invading your mattress by using allergen-proof bed covers. Dust mites thrive on dead skin and body oils — mattresses easily soak up. Next, be sure to turn your mattress four times a year so you are making sure weight and wear gets distributed evenly. It may sound unnecessary, but setting a calendar reminder every four months will help make this step painless. When you turn the mattress, it's also a good idea to vacuum the mattress and box springs, to help keep the allergens down. Another good tip: when you change the sheets, keep the mattress bare for a bit so it can air out. And always makes sure you never, ever get your mattress wet. If there is a risk of that, get a waterproof mattress cover.

From allergies to chronic pain, our mattresses play a bigger role in our health and well-being than we might understand. Taking care of your mattress means taking care of yourself.   Photo by Pexels

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