



Selecting Bed Pillows

People seem to be divided into two classifications: those who sleep with bed pillows and those who don't. Pillow sleepers have their special preferences, too – as to size, firmness or softness, foam or feathers and perhaps even the ticking. A pillow should be just thick enough to hold your head in the same relation to the shoulders and spine as when you are standing. A smart shopper sizes up the art of pillow hunting and shops accordingly—though who would think a pillow could cause so much thought? It's important, however, for a good night's sleep.

A Question of Size...

Look at the tag to know the size of the pillow. Take a second look. The tag may say “cut size,” “finished size,” or both. Cut size is the measurement before it is made. Finished size is the size of the ticking envelope laid flat before the filling is added. Actual dimensions are generally about an inch smaller than the finished size.

Sizes available are standard, oversized standard, queen, king and European square. A twin size bed usually uses a standard, but it can take a queen or king size if preferred. A queen size bed will use two standard or two queen size pillows. A king size bed requires two king or three standard sizes. European squares are sometimes used for decorative shams across the top of the bed.

An additional type of pillow that's currently popular is the full-length body pillow. It's used for comfort while sleeping, sitting in bed or watching television. It's especially recommended as additional support and comfort for expectant mothers or those recuperating from surgery.

Reading pillows have a back and arms and provide support for reading in bed. They are heavier and firmer in shape and often have a low back that may not give enough support.

Pick the Plump, Light One...

A good quality pillow –

- Will not be too heavy. For example, if two feather pillows are of equal size, the lighter, plumper one will be the better choice.
- Will be resilient. Test it by placing it on a flat surface and pressing both hands into its center. It should spring back into shape as soon as you take your hands away.
- Will be buoyant for head support with the right degree of softness or firmness. Will not be

lumpy. Lay the pillow over your forearm to test for proper amount of filling. A well-filled pillow will not droop. The filling will not shift or settle when you hold one end and shake the pillow vigorously.

- Will be free of dust, free of odor. Pound the pillow. There should be no dust. Smell it. If the pillow has the least odor, don't buy it.
- Will have a firmly woven cover so the filling can't leak out or dust get inside.
- Will have a label stating the type of filling material firmly attached to the pillow. This tag should be removed only by the person purchasing the pillow.

What's Inside? Foam or Feathers?

Do you prefer feather and/or down-filled pillows? Or perhaps you prefer fiberfill or foams. The choice is yours. Some are soft, some are medium and others are firm or extra-firm. Prices vary from about \$10.00 for foam to \$60 for all-down pillows of very good quality.

Feathers and down have been used for many years. The softness and quality of feathers vary with the type of feather used because each type of feather has a different structure. The softer and more resilient the feathers, the more costly the pillow. In general, waterfowl feathers make better quality pillows than land fowl feathers.

Down is the softest and most costly of all fillings, allowing your head to sink into the pillow slowly. What is down? It's the soft, fluffy undercoating of waterfowl. Eider down is the ultimate of softness and quality and comes from waterfowl in northern Europe, Asia and America. Down is often mixed with feathers to make a springier and firmer pillow. Since it is practically impossible to make a 100 percent down-filled pillow, guidelines specify that a pillow labeled as "down-filled" should contain no more than 15 percent feathers or other material.

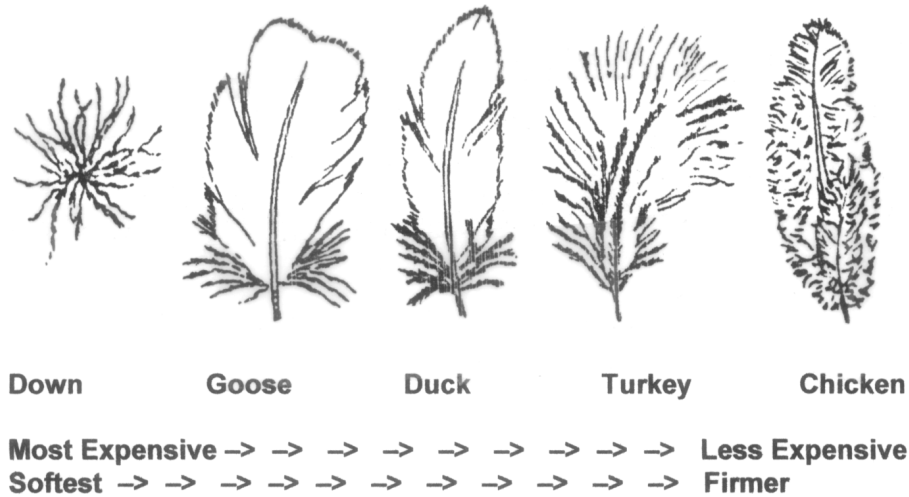
Goose feathers, especially imported ones, make the best feather pillows. They have a strong curved (somewhat cupped) quill shaft which gives them buoyancy, springiness and durability. Goose feathers are broad and fan-shaped at the tip, and have a quantity of fluff filaments at the shaft end—almost like down but growing from the quill shaft. A good quality goose feather pillow should last ten to fifteen years or longer with proper care.

Duck feathers rank next. They also have a curved quill shaft, but are less curved and weaker than the shaft of goose feathers. They are, therefore, less buoyant and less durable. Duck feathers are narrower, more pointed and have fewer soft, fluffy fibers growing from the base of the quill shaft than goose feathers. They are firmer and less expensive than goose feathers.

Turkey and/or chicken feathers are inferior pillow-stuffers. For this reason, they are less expensive at the time of purchase and will give less service in the long run.

- Turkey feathers have a great quantity of long, fluffy fiber growing from the quill shaft. They're quite soft, but the shaft is straight and weak. As a result, turkey feathers are less buoyant, springy and durable than either goose or duck feathers.
- Chicken feathers have straight, weak quill shafts like turkey feathers. They have more sheen

than other feathers and have an extra tiny feather growing from the quill shaft. They're low in buoyancy when weight is applied.



The possibilities of mixing the different types of feathers make it even more difficult to judge the worth of a pillow. Mixtures vary in percentages of different types and kinds of feathers. A mixture of 80% goose feathers and 20% down is popular. Down mixed with feathers keeps the feathers from matting and lumping and may be somewhat more durable than down alone.

Polyester fiberfill is soft, resilient, and does not develop musty odors as other fillings may do. It may be used alone as a filling or blended with feathers to combine the advantages of both fillings. Another option is to wrap fiberfill batting around foam forms to soften the lines. A one-piece batting is superior to a filling made from clumps of fibers since the batting will be less likely to lump during laundering. Some pillows are made from special allergy-free materials with anti-bacterial finishes.

Some people prefer allergy-free *foam fillings* made either from *latex (natural rubber foam)* or *urethane (synthetic foam)*. These pillows are lightweight, buoyant and extremely resilient. Those of highest quality are made from a solid piece rather than chopped latex. They're available in varying degrees of softness, but all are resistant to distortion. They seem to "fight back" rather than allowing your head to sink into them. Special thermo foams that conform to the shape of the head provide relief from pressure points. Foams contoured to fit the shape of the neck and head provide pressure-free support.

Quality Points For Ticking

The way a pillow performs and wears depends as much on the fabric covering and its construction as it does on the filling. A good pillow ticking or casing is made of a tight, closely woven fabric for feather and down pillows to avoid the filling working through the fabric. However, it also needs to be porous enough to allow the pillow to "breathe." Casings are usually made of plain woven or damask fabrics in cotton or polyester/cotton blends. Some labels indicate a thread count as high as

200 or 260. Cotton tickings are more absorbent than synthetics, less slippery. Tickings should be guaranteed not to shrink. Separate liners with zipper closures are often used to cover the ticking.

These liners can be easily removed for cleaning and keep the ticking and filling cleaner for a longer period of time.

A Good Pillow Deserves Good Care

Feather and down pillows should be fluffed daily. The air trapped in the filling adds to sleeping comfort. Push the corners toward the center so that the crown stays high and the pillow plump. Place them in the dryer occasionally on low heat for about ten minutes. This removes the humidity, helps keep them resilient and makes them fresh and plump. Polyester fiberfill pillows can also be placed in the dryer for freshening, but for these use a hot setting for about 45 minutes. Foam rubber pillows should *not* be placed in the dryer!

Whether pillows can be washed or not depends on the outer covering as well as the filling. Therefore, read all labels and hang tags for recommended care and follow the instructions carefully. Do not wash down or feather pillows unless the labels indicate they can safely be washed. Many people prefer to send them to a commercial cleaners instead. Before washing any pillows by machine, check to be sure pillow tickings are securely stitched. Repair any ripped seams or holes before washing.

To launder, partially fill the washer with warm water and then add detergent and agitate to dissolve the detergent. Place two pillows opposite each other in the washer to balance the load. Then let the washer completely fill with water. Push the pillows under the water to wet them thoroughly. Wash with gentle agitation for four to eight minutes. Stop the washer several times to press air from the pillows.

Most machine washable pillows can also be dried in the dryer, but foam must be dried **without** heat. Dry foam pillows on the air-dry cycle only. For others, use highest temperature setting and dry until pillows are fluffy and free of lumps. Stop the dryer occasionally and shake pillows to redistribute the filling and allow all parts of the pillow to dry evenly.

If washing down and feather pillows, be sure to allow time for them to dry thoroughly to prevent mildew. This may take one and one-half to two hours to dry completely. Caution: If you wash a pillow filled with low quality feathers, you can expect some loss in sleeping comfort.

References:

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Linda Reece Adler, M.A.
Extension Specialist for Home Furnishings
8/99 PPbedpillows.wpd