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Spring vs. Foam Mattresses

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(FOTODUETS)

If you're in the market for a [new mattress](#), you'll see a number of different mattress types. The three main types are [foam](#), [innerspring](#), and [hybrid](#), which is a combination of foam and innerspring. Whether you shop at a [bed-in-a-box company online](#) or at a brick-and-mortar store, all three of these types will be easy to find. The trick is figuring out which mattress type you'd prefer.

When selecting a mattress type, it all comes down to personal preference. While some like the body-hugging feel of an all-foam model, others may prefer an innerspring mattress because they want to feel like they're sleeping on top of their bed rather than sinking into it. It's worth noting that most models include a 100-night sleep trial, meaning you can return it within that time frame if you don't find it to be comfortable.

What Is a Spring Mattress Made Of?

[Spring mattresses](#) get their name from their support layer made of steel springs. These coils aren't dense like foam, and as such, can help promote airflow (a plus for hot sleepers). Notably, the thickness of the bed's coils determines the firmness of the mattress. With that in mind, there are different variations of coils on the market: Bonnell, pocketed, offset, and continuous.

Shaped like an hourglass, Bonnell coils were featured in the first commercial spring mattress. They are still used today and are cost-effective to produce, which means innerspring mattresses that use Bonnell coils are generally cheaper.

Pocketed coils are individually wrapped in fabric sleeves, allowing each spring to function in isolation from one another. While this reduces noise and motion transfer, models built with this system typically sell for a steeper price tag.

Similar to pocketed springs, offset coils are also costlier to manufacture than Bonnell ones, but they boast greater firmness. When it comes to structure, they're joined together with hinged wires to provide sleepers with varying levels of support depending on their needs. For instance, they flex under light pressure but give stronger pushback when more weight is applied.

Continuous wire coils use one single wire that's formed into a series of loose ringlets, which are then connected by helical lacing. Thanks to their tight construction, they're both durable and stable. They also don't require a lot of time or money to produce since they're simple in design. In fact, they're the most affordable variation you can buy.

To see some of the top spring mattresses we reviewed, visit our [Best Spring Mattresses of 2023](#) list.

What Is a Foam Mattress Made Of?

Standard [memory foam mattresses](#) are made of a polyurethane-based viscoelastic foam that adapts to the sleeper's body, offering relief to pressure points. Since foam traps heat, some memory foam models are infused with gel or copper, which may aid in keeping sleepers cool. Gel-infused foam mattresses, for example, feature integrated gel beads to help redistribute heat better. [Latex](#) models use either natural or synthetic latex foam. They tend to be denser and more durable than traditional foam beds.

The price tag of a foam mattress varies depending on the materials used. Polyurethane foam, sometimes referred to as polyfoam, is relatively inexpensive, while memory foam, copper-infused foam, and gel-infused foam are pricier. Likewise, latex, which is a higher-end material that lasts longer, is more expensive than polyurethane foam.

If you are in the market for a new mattress, there are [budget-friendly foam](#) beds available. Considering our rating of the [Best Memory Foam Mattresses of 2023](#), the most affordable bed to make the list costs \$415. Additionally, a handful of other foam mattresses in our evaluation sell for under \$1,000.

Which Is Better: Foam or Spring Mattresses?

A [memory foam mattress](#) contours to your body, which is important for [side sleepers](#) who need to sink into a mattress more so that their hips and shoulders align. Lighter-weight sleepers usually prefer this mattress type because the softness allows them to sink in and relieve any pressure points. But memory foam has a reputation for trapping heat. If you tend to sleep hot, it's worth considering a foam bed with cooling features added to the foam layers, like gel or copper particles.

Spring mattresses, on the other hand, do not share this problem because their coils allow for more airflow. Additionally, they are usually firmer and more responsive, making them a better fit for those who need more support, particularly stomach sleeper types or heavier-weight individuals.

Foam mattresses excel in motion isolation, a feature that couples will appreciate. Instead of transferring movement, foam absorbs it, which prevents partners from disturbing each

other's sleep when they toss or turn. Since coil mattresses have bounce, there's more of a chance that you'll hear and feel your partner's movements.

When you remove a foam mattress from its packaging for the first time, it's more prone to off-gassing, which is an initial chemical odor resulting from the release of volatile organic compounds (VOCs). While unpleasant, the smell has no known long-term effects, and it usually dissipates within a few days. However, it's a good idea to keep a window open while unpacking your bed to reduce the smell. You can also look for Global Organic Latex Standard-certified (GOLS) [latex](#) which is made to have very few VOCs and any off gassing should be nontoxic. As another option, if you can't decide between foam and springs, a [hybrid mattress](#) combines both memory foam and springs, delivering both contouring support and bounce.

Are Foam or Spring Mattresses Better for Back Pain?

A study conducted by the [National Center for Biotechnology Information](#) found that medium-firm mattresses are most suitable for those who suffer from back pain. Mattresses that are too firm won't provide sufficient comfort for pressure points, while beds that are too soft lack the support needed for spinal alignment.

Of all the models in our [Best Mattresses for Back Pain](#) rankings, most of the ones to top our list are [hybrid mattresses](#), which are built with both springs and memory foam. They are more responsive than traditional memory foam beds because of their springs, while offering the body-contouring support and pressure relief that foam mattresses deliver. Compared to innerspring models, hybrid beds feature more robust comfort layers.

Some mattresses on the market feature zoned support, which may provide targeted firmness to areas that carry more weight, such as your hips and lower back. For additional comfort, some brands also sell [mattress toppers](#) for an extra cost, which can add softness support to your existing mattress.

Choosing the right firmness depends on an individual's [body weight](#), sleeping position, and personal preference. It's important for back pain sufferers to keep in mind that most mattresses include a trial period that's typically 100 days, but sometimes can be as long as a year. If the bed you purchased doesn't feel comfortable, you can return it during this timeframe for a full refund.

How Long Do Foam Mattresses Last vs. Spring Mattresses?

Foam mattresses usually last between six to seven years, while innerspring beds have a shorter expected lifespan (around five to six years). However, this depends on many factors, including the materials of the mattress. For instance, high-density polyfoam and latex are more durable compared to low-density polyfoam, which wears out more quickly.

Both weight and sleeping position impact the longevity of a mattress. Couples place more stress on a bed than an individual sleeper. Additionally, [heavier weight people](#) may notice their bed sagging prematurely, while side sleepers may find indentations in the areas where they rest their hips and shoulders. At minimum, most mattress brands offer a limited warranty for at least 10 years, though there are brands that offer much longer periods. In most cases, however, this doesn't cover everyday wear and tear.

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At U.S. News & World Report, we rank the Best Hospitals, Best Colleges, and Best Cars to guide readers through some of life's most complicated decisions. Our 360 Reviews team draws on this same unbiased approach to rate the products that you use every day. To build our Best Mattresses of 2023 rating, our mattress and certified sleep science specialists researched more than 312 mattresses and analyzed 20 reviews. Our 360 Reviews team does not take samples, gifts, or loans of products or services we review. All sample products provided for review are donated after review. In addition, we maintain a separate business team that has no influence over our methodology or recommendations. See more details about our [360 Methodology for Evaluating Mattresses](#).

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