

# The physiotherapy Good sleep guide

## Midline position

Some people will only feel comfortable sleeping in one position, others choose to sleep in a variety of postures. Whichever position is preferred, chartered physiotherapists recommend keeping the body in the midline. This means maintaining the natural curves of the spinal structure to minimise stresses and strains.



## Lying on your side

- Chartered physiotherapists understand that each individual will vary. Lying on either side can help the structures of the back – discs, muscles and ligaments – adopt an optimal position.
- To achieve the midline position a pillow placed between bent knees could help support the hips. If you have a very soft bed, or an hourglass figure, pillows can be placed under the waist/side of the body to support your midriff and back. Increase or decrease the number of pillows to ensure that your neck is supported.

## Lying on your front

This position has the potential to cause the most problems. To minimise risks, be sure to keep the neck as near to the midline as possible – don't bend the neck too far forward, backward or twisted to one side. If you must sleep in this position:

- Try to sleep with a shoulder slightly back or place a pillow under the chest to ensure the neck is in the correct position.
- If possible, adopt a "quarter turn" by slightly raising one side of your body and placing a pillow under your belly to support you in this position.
- Note carefully that if your bed is too soft, you may put an asymmetrical strain on your spine.



## Lying on your back

- Place pillows under your knees to off-load the lower back.
- Make sure there are enough pillows to support the neck and head in the midline position, thereby preventing the head and neck from tilting forward or back.

## Getting out of bed

People are at their most vulnerable after a night's sleep because the spinal discs are full of fluid. Avoid any strenuous exercises first thing.

- When getting out of bed, roll on to your side, bend your knees, push hands to raise yourself up and lower your legs over the side of the bed. This will help protect your back.

