



Types of mattress (Part 1)

The market offers a wide variety of mattress types: wool, spring, latex, polyurethane and many others. Each type has its own characteristics that must be evaluated when making a choice. Here are a few more facts to help you choose.

WOOL MATTRESSES

Wool Mattresses are still custom-made by specialist mattress-makers. They are warm, soft, breathable and absorb body humidity. However they are somewhat outdated. They do not support the spinal column, easily lose their shape, require high and costly maintenance (the wool must be washed, combed and integrated at least once every two years) since, as they absorb body humidity, the wool gets flat, loses its elasticity and starts to mat. Wool mattresses are not recommended for people who suffer from allergies, on account of their high susceptibility to invasion by dust mites.



SPRING MATTRESSES

Spring mattresses are the most widely used in the world today. Layers of stuffing and insulation are laid between springs and the outer covering to ensure a restful and comfortable position. These factors combined with quality and technology give rise to a range of products that may appear identical, but often are not. A spring mattress's structure facilitates internal aeration and provides effective support for the body, and is particularly suitable for people with a large build. It is hygienic and recommended for those who perspire a lot. Its high level of breathability makes it ideal for use in areas that are particularly hot. In versions with removable covering and synthetic stuffing, it helps to prevent colonisation by dust mites. A spring mattress's response to weight covers large areas, and not only separate points of pressure.

To improve performance, researchers and the industry have developed a more advanced spring mattress, where the springs are individually wrapped in cloth coverings, so that they act independently, thereby adding enormously to comfort. Spring mattresses require bed bases that are as near in possible to size, and must never be smaller than the mattress itself. They made be used on rigid surfaces, divans and slatted bed bases (with slats no more than 6cm apart).

LATEX MATTRESSES

Natural latex is secreted from the laticiferous system of the cortex of plants belonging to the Euphorbia family. Extensive use of this material since the beginning of the last century has created the need for mass-produced products similar to natural rubber. For industrial use, latex is produced in single-cell or double-cell blocks, and is either moulded or processed in continuous production. Latex mattresses support the body by responding to single points of pressure: this makes it more accommodating. It is a very elastic material (withstands severe deformation without breaking), resilient (it quickly returns to its original size) and is a good insulator, which makes it suitable for use in hot or cold areas.



SPRINGS



LATEX

Nella versione sfoderabile e/o con imbottitura sintetica contrasta la colonizzazione degli acari. Il materasso di lattice, per l'elevata permeabilità all'aria e all'acqua delle celle aperte che formano la sua struttura, ha una notevole capacità di ventilazione e necessita quindi di una base che permetta lo smaltimento dell'umidità che il corpo umano produce nel sonno. La base ideale è rappresentata dalla rete a doghe in legno di larghezza inferiore a circa sette centimetri.

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Types of mattress (Part 2)

Given its elastic properties, latex mattresses are particularly suitable for use with adjustable bed bases.

POLYURETHANE MATTRESSES

Polyurethane is a member of the plastics family. It was invented in 1935 by Otto Bayer. Over the last ten years, advances in production technology have made it possible to produce ecological flexible polyurethane foams, in which the expanding agent is water. These new generation products are enormously different, resistant, ergonomic, even more elastic and contain no substances that may be harmful to man or the environment.



POLYURETHANE

Polyurethane is produced in blocks and manufactured by continuous production. Polyurethane mattresses have a low density, and therefore, a weight capacity that adjusts to their user. It is non-deformable (withstands severe deformation without

breaking, and quickly returns to its original size) and therefore very flexible (it adjusts to the weight, position and size of the person using it); it is a good insulator and hence is suitable in cool or cold climates. In versions with removable covering and/or synthetic stuffing, it helps to prevent colonisation by dust mites. It may be antibacterial and antistatic-treated. Polyurethane mattresses may be used on all types of bed base.

OTHER TYPES

WATER MATTRESSES The original water mattress was made out of rubber sheets in 1813. In 1832 a hydrostatic bed was patented. Today's water mattresses have a frame in polyurethane foam, and include a safety tank, a vinyl water mattress containing devices to reduce the movement of the liquid.

By their very nature, water mattresses hinder perspiration and are very heavy.

AIR MATTRESSES The original air mattress was already widely in use by the end of the nineteenth century. Today's models use two opposing systems: the Ron Arad Transformer seat (with PVC exterior filled with polystyrene foam granules, to achieve a rigid shape in case the air inside is sucked out) and the system used for makeshift beds (such as camp beds and lilos). Apart from these experiments, air mattresses (equipped with small compressors) are used in healthcare units to prevent bedsores in long stay patients.

MATTRESSES MADE FROM PLANT FIBRES

Today there is a revival of mattresses produced by combining straw with other elementary materials such as leaves, peat, hay and aromatic herbs. These products are loved by naturalists who believe they have regenerative and restorative properties. However, the health benefits and properties of these mattresses are yet to be demonstrated. Italian and international standards do not consider these types of materials and products within the mattress category.

FUTONS Futons are oriental-style mattresses. They are thin, flexible, may be rolled up and are made of completely natural materials, usually cotton that may also be combined with other materials. Their structure does not provide adequate support to the spine.

COMBINED MATTRESSES It is becoming more and more frequent to find mattresses produced by layering different types of materials (e.g. latex and horsehair, coconut, coir and others). These products may either enhance the distinctive properties of different materials or lead to uncomfortable mattresses that are soon unusable. When considering these products it is even more important to refer to expert manufacturers.

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