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Sleep right, sleep tight

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Reward yourself on world sleep day

The theme of this year's World Sleep Day on March 17 is: "Sleep soundly, nurture life".

This brings into focus how vital a good night's sleep is for one's physical and mental well-being.

Mattresses have come a very long way since 1881 when Texas cotton farmer, Daniel Haines, noticed how enthusiastic his workers were to sleep on the cotton wadding he had baled into sacks.

So it was that the small town of Sealy, west of Houston, was put on the map as one of the sleep innovators of the world.

"Sleeping well helps our brains function better, making us more successful in our jobs and at learning, as well as helping protect us," says sales and marketing executive at Bravo Group Sleep Products, Ras Erasmus.

The company is part of South Africa's largest furniture manufacturer and home to sleep products such as Sealy, Slumberland and Edblo.

"A very high proportion of road accidents are due to impaired judgment because of sleep deprivation," Erasmus says.

Plenty of us forget one of the key fundamentals when we worry about how to improve our sleep quality, though.

"Adults spend a third of their lives asleep," Erasmus adds.

"But we all tend to spend less time on selecting the right bed and mattress to help us sleep better, than we do on buying a car in which most of us spend only about an hour or so a day," he added.

"That is why one of the first things to check if you are suffering from poor sleep is the surface that you are trying to sleep on."

CHECK YOUR MATTRESS:

Check whether your mattress and base are worn out. Red flags include looking saggy, uneven or out of shape, says Erasmus.

"Your body might also warn you that the bed you're trying to sleep on is past its best," he says. "A good night's sleep should mean that you wake up refreshed and re-energised, ready to take on the day's challenges," he says.

"But a worn-out bed might wear you out instead, so that you toss and turn at night or get pins and needles when you're lying down, giving you poorer quality sleep."

Ideally, you should replace your mattress and base at least every 10 years, says Erasmus.

It should be sooner if you have developed sleep problems as updating could transform your night's sleep.

He says anyone who has not bought a bed in the past decade will be astonished at how developments in mattress technology based on the comfort-sell concept have spread across all levels of products.

This move ensures that consumers achieve a much better night's sleep.

THE BED'S COMFORT:

Dealers should now spend time with customers in a bed comfort.

The test is aimed at narrowing down your comfort preferences before you even start shortlisting possible bed purchases.

Key technological advances to look for include:

1. Layers of memory foam that adapt to compensate for pressure points when you are lying down.
2. New forms of springs with hinging to support your weight better and distribute it more comfortably.
3. Gel beads to give a cooler feel;
4. Coverings derived from materials such as bamboo pulp, which are antibacterial, anti-fungal and vaporise moisture easily, as well as being from sustainable sources.

Remember to budget for a new base and not just a new mattress, notes Erasmus.

"Usually the base sags along with the mattress, so replacing the mattress only will solve just a part of your problem," he says.

"It would be like buying a new car but keeping the chassis from your old one.

"Most consumers overlook the fact that when they are investing in their bed, they are investing in their health and their future," says Erasmus.

"That is why keeping your bed in good shape will help keep you in good shape as well – making it an essential and not an indulgence," Erasmus adds.