

Memory foam mattress

NEED TO KNOW

Memory foam mattresses are increasingly popular because they are good at relieving pressure on painful joints. But they're more expensive than ordinary mattresses, with prices from £240 to more than £800 for a single.

They're made with layers of high-tech material, called visco-elastic, originally developed for NASA. This temperature-sensitive foam is attached on top of springs or thick polyurethane foam. As it's put on only one side of the mattress, most mattresses can't be turned over. Instead you rotate them to ensure they wear evenly.

The sprung type tends to be thicker and heavier than the foam type, so is harder to turn. It also has fixed covers, which cannot be washed. But both types offer similar support and pressure relief.

SINKING IN

It takes time to get used to a memory foam mattress because the foam softens in response to body heat, moulding to your shape as you sink into it. It means more of your body is in contact with the mattress.

People who find it painful to lie down in bed should find memory foam comfortable because the body's weight is spread more evenly on the mattress. But the high surface contact can leave you feeling engulfed by the mattress; you may also find it harder to turn during the night.

BEST BUYS

Most of the memory foam mattresses we tested are well built and offer good body support. But our Best Buys stand out because they have the best overall combination of body and lumbar support, and didn't sag or lose much firmness in our harsh test for durability, which involved passing a roller over each one 60,000 times to simulate around ten years of use.

FOAM ONLY

The **Healthbeds (1)** is the best choice if you don't like the idea of being swallowed by the surface of your mattress. It's the softest of the foam-only Best Buys. You'll sink into it less than the others, without losing the pressure-relieving benefits of the foam. The cover is removable so it can be cleaned, but there are no washing instructions on it. Healthbeds tells us that it is dry clean only. Prices start from £499 for a single. Call 01709 559977 for stockists.

The **Body Impressions (2)** offers the best body and lumbar support and is the best choice if you want a medium-firm mattress that will stay that way. But you'll sink into it more than the Healthbeds. The cover is removable and can be washed at 40°C and drip-dried. It costs from £499 for a single. Call 0870 4019808 for stockists.

The **Sleepshaper (3)** is another good mattress and the only Best Buy with washing instructions on its cover. The cover is machine washable, which makes it particularly suitable for people who have dust-mite allergies and want to clean the cover regularly. The mattress is medium firm and is available in a variety of thicknesses; we tested the

DURABILITY

We simulated the equivalent of a 20-stone person rolling for around ten years to test durability. Most coped well with this standard test. For instance, the height and firmness of both Healthbeds barely altered. But the Sealy (17) sagged and developed two deep cuts where the end of the roller passed. The memory foam layers on the Tempur (12) were torn open on both samples we tested.

We told Tempur our findings and it expressed its confidence in its mattresses: 'We have sold many hundreds of thousands and have received no complaints against tearing of our material'.

20cm version. It costs from £520 for a single. Ring 01235 811866 for where to buy in your area.

The **Kaymed (4)** is also a medium-firm mattress and is the heaviest of the foam-only Best Buys, which makes it harder to rotate. There are no washing instructions for the cover but Kaymed says you should wash it at 40°C or lower, with a short spin. Prices begin at £529 for a single. Call 01706 875 075 for stockists.

SPRING AND FOAM

The **Healthbeds (13)** is a pocket-sprung memory foam mattress that is the thickest and heaviest of the Best Buys – making it harder to turn, despite the four handles. It feels soft and provides the best body and lumbar support of the sprung mattresses. Prices start from £449 for a single. Call 01709 559977 for local stockists.

BEST ON TEST

BEST BUY

BEST BUY

BEST BUY

BEST ON TEST

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TEMPERATURE

Memory foam softens in response to body heat, so your body gradually sinks into it. Even this Healthbeds, which lets you sink into it the least, will have greater contact with your body than an ordinary mattress. This reduces air circulation around your body and makes the mattress feel

warmer. Many people find this helpful in winter, especially because you can't use an electric underblanket with memory foam. But you may feel too hot in summer. Memory foam is affected by room temperature so you might find it cold and hard when you first go to bed.

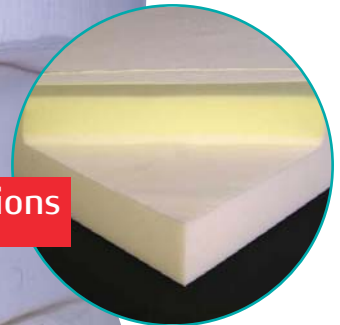
ODOUR

All memory foam mattresses have a distinctive chemical smell when you first unpack them, but this Body Impressions and The Old English Bed Company (5) mattresses were particularly smelly. Leave your mattress to air for a week before using it and the fumes will disperse.

1 Healthbeds
FOAM ONLY



2 Body Impressions
FOAM ONLY



3 Sleepshaper
FOAM ONLY



4 Kaymed
FOAM ONLY



13 Healthbeds
SPRING AND FOAM



Buying and care

Try a memory foam mattress before you buy it. Wear the most pyjama-like clothing you can in public, take off your shoes and lie on the bed for 15 to 20 minutes.

Take your partner with you. Lie on the bed together and move around to see if the noise from any springs, or movement made by the

other person, disturbs you.

Relax in one position, then move into another. Was it easy or did you struggle to move? If the latter, you might find the mattress will restrict your movement too much, especially in cold weather, when the foam will be harder.

Once you've bought your

mattress, make sure that, if you put it on a slatted base, the slats are no more than 6cm wide or more than 4cm apart. This ensures sufficient ventilation, but prevents the mattress sagging through the slats.

If you're allergic to dust mites, buy a mattress with a washable cover and avoid making your bed in the morning.

Drawing the covers up over a warm bed provides exactly the right warm, damp, dark environment for dust mites to breed.



The Healthbeds (1) doesn't engulf you when you lie down

USING THE TABLE

We've tested popular mattresses from the most widely available suppliers.

Specification

Prices These are a guide to what you can expect to pay for a single and king size, respectively.

Depth Thickness of the mattress and memory foam, respectively.

Sizes The sizes available. S is single (3'), D is double (4' 6"), K is king (5') and SK is superking (6').

Cover Clean the removable cover (if present) by machine washing (mw) or dry-cleaning (dc).

Performance

Body/Lumbar How well the mattress supports the whole body and lower back, respectively,

before and after the durability test.

Pressure How well the memory foam layer minimises the pressure exerted on the areas that bear weight when you lie down.

Contact Indicates how much of the body is in contact with the mattress. Too much contact makes it harder for moisture to escape and for the temperature to stay comfortable, and can make moving about harder. **Durability** Indicates the damage caused by having the equivalent of 20 stone run over it 60,000 times. The memory foam was damaged in mattresses with scores of ●.

Ease of use How easy it is to turn the mattress and use the handles and how easy it is to clean the removable cover according to the instructions if present.

KEY

★ ☆ ○ ● ●

Best → Worst

■ Best Buy

SCORE

Ignores price and is based on:

Performance	55%
Durability	35%
Convenience	10%

Memory foam mattresses

	Specification			Performance								Score (%)
	Prices (£)	Depth (cm)	Sizes	Handles	Cover	Body	Lumbar	Pressure	Contact	Durability	Ease of use	
FOAM ONLY												
1 Healthbeds Memory Flex	499, 799	23,7	S,D,K,SK		dc	☆	★	★	○	★	☆	82
2 Body Impressions Night Therapy	499, 699	20,8	S,D,K,SK		mw	★	★	★	●	★	☆	79
3 Sleepshaper Memory Regular Feel	520, 790	20,9	S,D,K,SK		mw	☆	★	○	●	★	★	78
4 Kaymed Classic Original	529, 799	20,10	S,D,K,SK		mw	☆	★	☆	●	★	☆	77
5 The Old English Bed Co Comfort Form	430, 750	21,7	S,D,K,SK		dc	○	★	☆	●	★	○	74
6 Breasley Foam Flexcell 1000	499, 699	20,10	S,D,K,SK		dc	☆	☆	☆	○	★	☆	73
7 Staples Contour	425, 649	22,7	S,D,K,SK		n/a	☆	★	○	●	★	○	72
8 Komfi Fusion	475, 850	20,10	S,D,K		mw	☆	★	○	●	☆	★	70
9 Airsprung Memory Master Shadow	348, 528	19,7,5	S,D,K		n/a	☆	○	○	●	★	○	65
10 Eurolox Bodyshape Royale	449, 899	24,10	S,D,K,SK	✓	n/a	☆	○	☆	●	☆	●	63
11 Concept Première	390, 630	24, 7,5	S,D,K,SK		dc	○	★	★	●	○	○	62
12 Tempur Combi Mattress 20cm	865, 1,499	20,9	S,D,K,SK		mw	★	★	☆	●	●	★	50
SPRING AND FOAM												
13 Healthbeds Memory Med 1400	449, 799	25,5,5,0	S,D,K,SK	✓	n/a	☆	★	○	●	★	●	74
14 Myer's Conforma	229, 429	23,7	S,D,K	✓	n/a	○	★	★	●	★	●	71
15 Slumberland Posturecare V1200	395, 640	24,6	S,D,K,SK	✓	n/a	○	☆	☆	●	★	●	68
16 Kaymed Visco Pocket 1600	359, 529	26,5,6,5	S,D,K,SK	✓	n/a	☆	○	☆	○	★	●	67
17 Sealy Images	250, 399	28,6	S,D,K,SK	✓	n/a	○	★	★	●	●	●	50