

Tips on Buying Organic Mattresses

By **Sandra Ramani**

"If you sleep for eight hours a night, then you spend at least one third of your life in bed," says Walt Bader, president of organic bedding brand Lifekind and author of *Toxic Bedrooms: Your Guide to a Safe Night's Sleep*. "But while we are aware of the chemicals that surround us out in the world, how often do we look into what's in what we're sleeping on?" As Bader explains, there are no laws about what can be put in a mattress—or how much manufacturers have to disclose—so, as a result, some traditional models are packed with chemicals, and even carcinogens. "We're in the same position with mattresses as we were with cigarettes in the 1930's," Bader believes.

Luckily, these days we can do something about it. "Instead of asking just whether a mattress is firm or comfortable," Bader stresses, "ask 'Is it safe?'" To find out how to best do that, we asked Bader and eco-mattress designer Danny Seo for their mattress-buying tips:

GET UNDER THE COVERS. When looking for a natural or organic mattress, make sure those certifications apply to the whole item and not just certain components, caution both experts. "You don't want something with just an organic cotton cover that then labels itself 'natural,'" cautions Seo, while Bader says you should not be afraid to "ask questions about the additives, the raw materials, even the production facility. It's a question of purity." At the OMI mattress factory, for example, employees are not allowed to smoke, wear fragrance, or use a fabric softener on their clothes to help keep the facility chemical-free—a big plus for customers with allergies or sensitivities.

KNOW YOUR MATERIALS. Once you've got the list of materials, what should you look for? In general, avoid mattresses made with chemical-based fire

retardants, formaldehydes, pesticide-treated cottons, anti-fungicides, or other harsh chemicals. Also skip those "memory foam" mattresses, which are typically made with polyurethane foam—a derivative of petroleum that may be carcinogenic. Instead, look for naturally derived ingredients like rubber tree-based latex, soy-enhanced base foam, organic cotton, and sustainably harvested woods. These components are not only healthy—most are hypoallergenic, help keep dust mites, mold, and bacteria at bay and help regulate body temperature—but are also comfortable, working to cradle the body and support pressure points. Many of the leading natural mattress brands have also earned certification from governing boards like the USDA, GOTS (Global Organic Textile Standard), Greenguard and Oeko-Tex, so look for those credentials, too.

TAKE YOUR TIME. According to Lifekind, studies show that the average customer spends as little as two minutes laying on a mattress at the store—far too short for something so important. Instead, don't be afraid to take your time and test out a variety of sleeping positions to ensure compatibility. If you are ordering over the Internet, give the company a call: a well-trained expert should be able to make appropriate recommendations based on your height, weight, and sleeping habits. Many companies will also send a sample of their mattress material to you first to ensure there are no allergies, so just ask.

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MATTRESS PICKS

OMI

Founded by a life-long allergy sufferer, OrganicPedic by OMI mattresses are made in a chemical-, smoke- and fragrance-free facility, using materials like natural buckwheat, sustainably harvested rubber, and 100 percent organic wool. The products are also finished in an ozone sanitation chamber, ensuring added protection against molds and bacteria. Styles range from The Classic—an 8-inch innerspring version layered with organic cotton canvas and signature quilting—to The Terra, a luxurious 12-inch piece made of natural latex rubber with a removable dual-sided pillow-top. It's no wonder bold-facers like Pierce Brosnan, Halle Berry, and—rumor has it—the Obamas are fans. www.omifactory.com

DUX

Among the more luxurious mattresses on the market, Oeko Tex 100-certified Dux beds have been handmade in Sweden for over 80 years using local steel, slow growth pine from the north of the country, and high thread-count cotton; top pads are made with rubber tree-based latex. There are four spring-based models currently on the market: most include the signature Pascal Personal Comfort Support, which lets each sleeper adjust settings for shoulders, lower back, and legs, while the higher-end models also include adjustable lumbar support. www.duxiana.com

LIFEKIND

One of the leaders of the organic bedding market, Lifekind mattresses are made in a chemical-free facility using certified organic cotton, organically-grown wool, Talalay 100 percent natural rubber, and an ozone-based sanitizing process. Products are free from any toxic ingredients—including polyurethane foams or chemical flame-retardants—and can be custom made to your desired size, shape, or levels of firmness. Standard options range from the medium-firm Traditional, with innersprings, six layers of cotton padding and a pure wool quilted cover, to the 10 inch Combo, a bouncy mix of natural rubber and innersprings with multiple layers of hand-tufted cotton, and two inches of rubber. www.lifekind.com



Lifekind's "European-style" natural rubber mattress

NATURAL CARE

Created by designer Danny Seo for mattress giant Simmons, these stylish beds are made with natural latex derived from the milk sap of the rubber tree—a durable, resilient material that offers pressure point support, is hypoallergenic and dust mite-resistant, and keeps its shape for years. Bases are made from soy-enhanced foam, foundations use sustainably harvested wood, and the whole mattress boasts a convenient No-Flip design. (Each mattress is also made-to-order in whichever of their factories is closest to your location, to help reduce carbon emissions.) In addition to the New Hope version available exclusively at JC Penny, the line includes the mid-level Branch River and the top-of-the-line Pikes Peak, with several inches of support layer latex and 360-degrees of foam; fans include celebs like Eva Longoria. www.naturalcarebed.com



OMI's Organicpedic Oval Crib Mattress

ANATOMIC GLOBAL

For sleepers who want that memory foam feel minus the petrochemicals, this California-brand has got you covered. EcoMemoryFoam™, Anatomic Global's exclusive material, contains significant amounts of open-cell, plant-based ingredients that do not retain heat (unlike traditional foam options), but still offer cushy support. Mattress covers use moisture-wicking bamboo—further ensuring an even sleep-temperature—and are made without zippers; the whole production takes place using a zero-air emissions manufacturing process to help limit the carbon footprint. www.ecomemoryfoam.com