

Waterbeds, futons, hammocks provide ... yawn ... alternatives

By CORT FERNALD

More than a third of a person's life is spent asleep. But probably a greater amount of time is spent in bed reading, watching television, or doing other things.

Choosing a bed from the many types available can be indicative of a person's lifestyle. After all, there are traditional mattress and box springs, the waterbed, the loft bed, the platform bed, canopy beds and futons.

But choice of the type of bed can be also depend on health reasons. Quite a bit of scientific research has been devoted to sleeping and the merits or demerits of certain types of beds.

There has been a boom in the use of foam. Foam mattresses were, until recently, considered only suitable for recreational vehicles.

Foam mattresses have become "pretty popular for a lot of different reasons," says Jim Hawkins, manager of the Custom Mattress Company.

Hawkins says foam, which is covered with mattress ticking, can be used in RVs or as "waterbed replacements." The advantages over conventional mattresses, according to Hawkins, include "you don't have to buy a set."

Custom Mattress sells foam in different sizes and densities, from 4 to 6 inches. The price depends on size and thickness of the mattress.

Bill Dwyer, manager of Poly Foam Center says that rather than by choice, people "buy foam by intelligence."

"Have you ever seen a foam mattress for sale in the paper?" he says.

The uniqueness of foam mattresses, says Dwyer, is that there are "no buttons, no bumps and no ripples."

Foam mattresses can last 20 years, according to Dwyer. The quality of the foam has been upgraded, he says, "it doesn't wear out."

Dwyer has what he calls "tons" of students buying foam for mattresses and to make furniture out of. "Foam is much more expensive — but much more palatable," says Dwyer.

Futons, which are basically cotton batting, are very popular with students, according to Roseann Colucci, owner of the Eugene Trading Company.

"Students can't afford to have a huge bed," says Coucci. They need the space for studying, she adds.

Futons are not as expensive as foam and can fold up into couches, Calucci says. But futons are "not just for people who don't have money," she says.

As for sleeping, Calucci says futons are "firm yet comfortable... flexible, but really good for the spine."

Futons range in size from singles to king and average about \$85 for a double.

Rick John, manager of the Waterbed Factory, can cite extensive research to support his claim that waterbeds provide the best type of bed.

"Total flotation sleeping," says John, eliminates the problems of sleeping on a regular bed. Regular beds provide uneven support to the body and cause blood circulation to be cut-off to certain parts, according to John. He says that's why people who sleep on "dead beds" toss and turn and often wake with no feeling in an arm or leg.

John says that 8 out of every 10 persons in California are sleeping on waterbeds. Nationwide, he says 6 out of every 10 people have chosen waterbeds.

The type of person selecting a waterbed has changed over the last ten years. John says waterbeds used to be popular among an 18- to 30-year-old lower income group. Now, he has demographics reporting that waterbeds are becoming increasingly popular with 45- to 50-year-old upper income individuals.

But waterbeds present a problem for people living in apartments. A number of rental agencies and property owners prohibit tenants from having waterbeds.

Al Steffen, of Income Property Management says "there is no standard policy (on waterbeds). It depends on the structural integrity of the building and the desires of the individual owners."

However, the standard IPM rental contract states "No waterbeds are permitted."

"The agreement can be modified if the building can take a waterbed and the owner permits a waterbed to go in there," says Steffen.

Matt Hawkins, assistant manager at Action Property Man-

agement, says that they have it written in their rental contracts that the tenant must have liability insurance in order to have a waterbed.

"Apartment owners are extremely uneducated" when it comes to waterbeds, says John. The weight distribution is more even and actually less than a standard refrigerator. According to John, a waterbed averages only 39.6 pounds per square foot.

John believes the bad rap on waterbeds can be traced to "10 or 12 years ago" when waterbeds were a fad and people simply put them on the floor. There were early problems with waterbed mattress seams and the leakage ruined many a hardwood floor. Since then advances in waterbed technology, coupled with the use of frames and liners, has all but eliminated the problem of leakage, according to John.

But sometimes, it's more expedient to simply throw a mattress on the apartment floor. Whether on foam, futons or flotation, there are a lot of ways to get a good night's... yawn... sleep.

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