

Sleep Like An Egyptian

A look at Inclined Bed Therapy

Animals in the wild tend to sleep at an incline, with the head higher than the tail. Our ancestors seemed to have a similar habit. Bed frames of the royalty, dating back to ancient Egypt, usually show a headward incline of around 5 degrees headward, which means that the head of the bed is about 6 inches higher than the foot of the bed.

According to Andrew Fletcher, the founder of modern Inclined Bed Therapy, inclining your bed will confer multiple health benefits, such as improved circulation, digestion, breathing, deeper and more restful sleep, as well as reducing sleep apnea, snoring, acid reflux, varicose veins, back pain, and neck pain.

Some of these benefits may be explained in terms of anatomy and physiology. In addition, as a mechanical engineer, with a knowledge of fluid dynamics, Fletcher had his own explanation to account for some of the circulatory benefits. However, his model is not currently accepted by the scientific and medical community. Non-the-less, the efficacy of inclined bed therapy is being studied, and shows promise.

Even though research on inclined bed therapy is still in it's infancy, it is already gaining recognition among health care professionals. Most notably, chiropractors, osteopaths, pulmonologists, surgeons, physical therapists, cardiologists, and others, are recommending it to their patients. For example, chiropractors recommend it because it gives a gentle traction to the spine and can help with alignment.

Options for Inclining Your Bed

- Place wooden blocks or boards under the bed frame so as to raise the head of the bed about six inches.
- Place a firm full length wedge of desired thickness under the mattress.
- Get an adjustable bed.
- If six inches of elevation feels awkward at first, you can start with a lesser smaller to give your body time to adapt.

My Experience with an Inclined Bed

- My sleep quality has improved.
- Prior to inclining my bed, if I stayed in bed longer than usual, I might have some low back stiffness in the morning. That does not happen anymore.
- As of the time of this writing, I have been sleeping on an inclined bed for about 6.5 years. I don't think about it anymore. It just feel normal to me. And I happen to be traveling and sleep on a totally horizontal surface, it feels like I'm being compressed.

Points of Caution

- The use of an inclined sleepers for infants is strongly discouraged by the American Pediatrics Association.
- If you are considering using inclined bed therapy for any specific health challenge, I recommend that you first consult your primary health-care provider.