

MATTRESS NIGHTMARES

Most of us spend about a third of our lives sleeping. Sometimes, buying the right mattress from the right store can be challenging.

Trap

After buying their Delray Beach condo in March, Hilda and Frank needed to purchase a new bedroom and mattress set before returning to their Pennsylvania home in April. They took advice from a neighbor and were fortunate enough to find a store that would guarantee delivery prior to their April departure.

The Jacksons made their purchase decision based on a brochure as the furniture had to be delivered from another store. The furniture arrived a day before their departure, and everything appeared to be as ordered. The Jacksons were relieved to know they would have a new bed to sleep in when they returned to Florida.

In November after a long flight, the Jacksons returned to their Delray Beach condo to finalize decorating decisions, and they looked forward to a good night's sleep. About a week later, Frank began noticing his back was bothering him when he woke each morning. Hilda was also not sleeping well and took a good look at the mattress. She found "body indentations" and what seemed to be a lump developing in the middle of the mattress.

Assuming these were defects, they called the store and asked to speak with the manager. To their dismay, the manager referred to their receipt which showed returns were possible only within seven days of purchase. The one-year manufacturer's warranty only allowed for replacement after an inspection confirmed a defect. The Jacksons would have been given a mattress "comfort exchange" if the request was made within thirty days of delivery. Instead, they would have to go through the manufacturer's inspection process with no guarantees.

Tips

Buying a mattress is an important decision for your sleeping comfort and overall good health. Consider these tips and rest a little easier:

- Don't be in a hurry. Allow for plenty of time and visit at least two or three different stores. It is likely that the particular mattress you loved for many years probably no longer exists. Be prepared to consider other choices.

Consumer Traps & Tips

- Take a note pad with you to the store, and keep track of your findings. Shop where the prices are clearly posted. If you find a mattress you like, write down the manufacturer's name and model number.
- Know what size mattress will fit the bedroom. You'll need to decide if you want a traditional coil mattress, a pillow top, adjustable air or foam. One is not necessarily better than another, so personal preference is the key.
- Wear comfortable clothes and shoes that slip off. Just pushing down or sitting on a mattress won't tell you much. Lie down, take your time (about 15 minutes) and don't let the salesperson rush you.
- Find out if the mattress comes with a "box spring." Sometimes the box spring is just a box — four sides with some interior supports that the mattress sits on.
- Be careful if you're considering a floor model. It will likely be sold to you "as is" with no warranty and no possibility of cancellation, return or exchange.
- Get the store's cancellation, return policies and the manufacturer's warranty in writing. Many stores have a "no cancellation" policy once the mattress is sold. Others may allow a few days or up to the date of delivery to cancel.
- Ask if the store has a "comfort exchange" policy to replace the mattress in case it's not right for you. If so, ask how long the policy lasts and get it in writing! The Jacksons lost a valuable option when they failed to consider this exchange period when they returned to their home in Pennsylvania.
- If the store is unable to resolve your problem, an inspection of the mattress by the manufacturer can be requested, but be prepared to wait. Be advised, the representative will be looking for defects in workmanship and materials only and not whether you find the mattress comfortable.
- Allow enough time on the day of delivery to inspect the mattress. Take the wrapping off and look at it closely, comparing it with the order form to make sure it's the right manufacturer and model. Do not accept delivery if the mattress is damaged or you note inconsistencies with the delivery receipt.

**For more information, call Palm Beach County Consumer Affairs at
561-712-6600 (Boca/Delray 888-852-7362 toll free)**

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