



Relax and Rejuvenate with

# Pillows and Bolsters

by Brandi Schlossberg

Anyone who has tossed and turned on an uncomfortable bed understands the impact of cushioning on a good night's sleep. The same holds true for those who wake up with pain after sleeping on a poor pillow or endure a massage session on bad padding. Fortunately, there are plenty of products made specifically to provide proper support during times of relaxation and sleep.

**F**or massage therapists, such products may translate to greater self-care, and they may also be used to enhance the client experience, both inside and outside the session room. Pillows, bolsters and other such items can improve client comfort and positioning, and also be offered for sale to increase the client's own self-care between sessions.

Here, we take a look at products that aim to boost the comfort and support of both clients and massage therapists, whether during sleep, inside the session room or while relaxing and resting around the house.

## Better rest for better health

A large body of research has connected quality sleep to overall health and wellness, showing the hours we spend snoozing are considered prime time for the body to perform vital tasks, including many repairs.

"During the day, we're in fight-or-flight mode, especially in our culture, and that's why sleep is such an issue for so many people," said Tara Grodjesk, founder and president of TARA Spa Therapy ([www.taraspa.com](http://www.taraspa.com)), which offers a line of pillows for personal and professional use. "We're on all the time, and the body doesn't do its healing very well when we're in warrior mode.

"When we go into a deep state of rest, the body can go into a restorative mode, healing and regenerating

right down to the cellular level," Grodjesk added. "The key is to shift from flight-or-fight mode to restorative rest, so the body can do its healing."

This seems to be the main mission of most therapeutic pillows and bolsters on the market today: to help people reach and maintain optimal rest as quickly as possible, thereby enhancing the body's ability to heal and function properly.

"It's impossible to ignore the correlation between sleep and good health," said Kristen Anderson, marketing coordinator for OPTP ([www.optp.com](http://www.optp.com)), a company that makes support products for wellness professionals and their clients. "That being said, many people have difficulty sleeping due to poor sleeping posture or injury. For this part of the population, a support may very well be the answer to a good night's sleep."

## Top support

For most people, whether wellness professionals or not, at least one pillow is standard for sleeping. This is the pillow that goes beneath your head, and there are several products designed specifically to support this region of the body for optimal rest and health.

One such product is the Mediflow Waterbase Pillow ([www.mediflow.com](http://www.mediflow.com)), comprising hypoallergenic fiber filling and a water pouch. The water pouch can be filled

with as much or as little water as needed to provide the most comfortable support for the individual sleeper.

"The Mediflow pillow should be used as an every-night pillow," said Brandon Falone, sales manager for the company. "Clinical sleep trials at Johns Hopkins School of Medicine and Logan College of Chiropractic showed the Mediflow pillow is preferred over other cervical pillows and that it improves the quality of sleep."

Another support product geared toward the head-and-neck region is the BioMat Amethyst and Tourmaline Pillow ([www.biomat.com](http://www.biomat.com)), which blends a number of elements to promote better rest.

"This therapeutic pillow combines the benefits of both amethyst and tourmaline for a natural dose of negative ions to the head-and-neck region," said Connie Shank, who owns the company. "Other benefits include supported neck-and-spine alignment, and maintaining a cool head area."

According to the BioMat website, this pillow contains a type of memory foam developed for NASA, and this foam conforms to your head and neck for optimal support.

For those who seek cervical support without the purchase of a whole new pillow, there are certain products that may simply be added to your current sleep setup. One such item is the OPTP Original McKenzie Cervical Roll.

"Easily slipping into most standard pillowcases, the Original McKenzie Cervical Roll supports the cervical spine

and promotes healthy sleeping habits on the side or back," said Anderson. "When added to a pillow, the cervical roll fills the void under the neck to maintain a healthy cervical lordosis."

## Lower body

A bit less common than a pillow beneath your head is the use of a pillow between or beneath your legs during sleep. Besides increasing comfort, leg pillows can also encourage proper posture during rest. Massage therapists may be familiar with using bolster pillows for this purpose in the session room, and this concept can be taken into the bedroom as well.

"Bolster pillows can be used in several ways to enhance sleep and relaxation," said John Ostman, vice president of sales and marketing for OneTouch Massage ([www.1massagestore.com](http://www.1massagestore.com)), a company that carries both full- and half-round bolster pillows. "The most popular application for use is while in a side-lying position, between the legs or knees in place of a traditional pillow, [which] has been shown to relieve pressure in the lower back."

At OPTP, two pillow products are made for supporting the legs. The first is the Positex Personal Wedge, and its purpose is to elevate one's legs during sleep and rest. The wedge's two-part construction allows the user to adjust the height, position and angle of the pillow.



PHOTOS BY THINKSTOCK

Use pillows and bolsters for client sessions and self-care, and as retail products in your practice.

“By elevating the legs, pressure is taken off the back,” Anderson said, “and a moderate lordosis is achieved for a more comfortable, pain-free night’s sleep.”

The company’s other lower-body support is called the OTPP Contour Leg Pillow, which is designed to fit between the knees in a side-sleeping position. According to the company, this keeps the right amount of space between the knees to ensure the knees and hips are in proper alignment.

Other pillow products

Aside from supporting the upper and lower regions of the body during sleep, therapeutic pillows may benefit other areas as well. For example, at TARA Spa Therapy, the Herbal Ease Silk Eye Pillow is made to induce relaxation and relieve tension around the eyes. Encased in cool silk covers, these eye pillows contain a combination of lavender, peppermint, chamomile, rose petals and rice.

“The eye pillow goes directly over the eyes to create a light, very gentle compression on the eyes, to help relieve tension and headaches,” said Grodjesk.

Grodjesk’s company also offers two other pillow products: the Herbal Ease Neck Pillow and the Herbal Ease Uni-Pack, the latter of which is a rectangular pillow that can be placed anywhere on the body. Both are filled with natural herbs and rice, and are made to be heated for a couple minutes in the microwave to bring out the benefits of aromatherapy and moist, penetrating heat.

“We work with spas and wellness clinics all over the country that use our Herbal Ease products,” Grodjesk said. “They’ll use the eye pillow with every massage, to create a very gentle compression and also to block out any stimulation and light.

“The neck pillow will be used while the client is waiting for the appointment,” she continued, “and the uni-pack can be used during the massage.”

Another form of therapeutic cushion is the OTPP Coccyx Pillow. This product is not made for sleep or for use in the session room, but rather for use anywhere you or your clients plan to sit for a prolonged period of time. This wedge cushion features a U-shaped notch designed to reduce pressure on the tailbone for relief and prevention of low-back pain.

Selling support

By using pillows, bolsters and other such products to provide your body with proper support, you are taking steps toward improved self-care. Many massage therapists may choose to introduce the benefits of therapeutic

cushions to their clients not only by using them inside the session room, but also by offering these items for sale to promote client self-care.

According to Grodjesk, selling therapeutic pillows is a perfect fit for a massage practice. The client can experience the comfort of the cushion during his or her appointment, and the sale of such products can benefit both client and therapist.

“Number one, this gives massage therapists an additional source of revenue,” Grodjesk said. “It’s a very simple way to build up their business.

“They use the pillow during the session, the client falls in love with it, and then it’s available to purchase and take home,” she continued. “This helps extend the benefits of the massage because the products encourage relaxation and stress relief between appointments.”

Massage therapists also may choose to sell cushions they do not use in the session room, such as the therapeutic pillows designed to support one’s head and neck during sleep.

“By helping clients find a proper pillow that can be adjusted to them specifically, the massage therapist is able to provide clients with a tool to help them achieve a proper night of sleep,” said Falone.

OTPP’s Anderson echoes the sentiments of both Grodjesk and Falone, describing the sale of therapeutic pillows and bolsters as a natural extension of one’s massage practice.

“As a massage therapist, the health and well-being of your client is the ultimate goal,” she said. “Offering affordable products that promote healthy posture and better sleep will benefit both the client and the therapist.

“Clients may experience better results as they maintain proper sleep posture at home and, in general, are more rested,” Anderson added. “This will then benefit the massage therapist when the client returns in a healthier state, allowing progression of treatment.”

Client care, self-care

Whether you choose to use pillows and bolsters on your clients inside the session room, for your own home care during times of relaxation and sleep, or perhaps a combination of both, it is clear these support products offer myriad support.

Brandi Schlossberg is an avid bodywork client and full-time journalist based in Reno, Nevada. She has written recently for *MASSAGE Magazine* on topics including “Vitamin D: Are You Getting What You Need?” (June) and “Build Your Massage Practice with Online Tools” (July). 

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