

Pillow Talk: What Your Pillow Might Be Saying *By Joel Metelits, MD*

Many of my patients buy new pillows every 6 to 12 months, not because the pillows were “cheap”, but because the material started breaking down or was so discolored by the yellow



haze of perspiration, that the pillows were simply thrown out. To protect their pillows, many patients cover their pillows with a water-resistant liner which can be washed along with their pillow cases. If you are not the one who does the wash, then check out the status of your pillows by asking the person who does your laundry.

When asked why a person uses a liner in addition to a pillow case, a frequent explanation offered is hygiene or that this is what their family always did. A more likely explanation: excessive perspiration while sleeping. In Arizona, many patients have ceiling fans operating over their beds throughout the night; they may not be aware of perspiration, but their pillows hold the clue that they are perspiring throughout the night. Unless someone experiences drenching sweats, then these yellow-stained pillows may be the only clue that a person is perspiring excessively.

Any disease which is associated with inflammation (infection, arthritis, or increased cell production) can result in excess perspiration. Perhaps your bedroom might be too warm. Women under the appropriate circumstances will blame their hormones. Certainly all of these explanations could be correct, but an alternative explanation for excessive night-time perspiration (especially behind the neck and on the



upper chest) is sleeping with unhealthy low oxygen levels. Patients even with mild lung disease or sleep apnea have no problem with their oxygen levels when they are awake, but their oxygen levels drop when they sleep. These low oxygen levels can often be associated with unusual or disturbing dreams, fluid retention (leg swelling) and headaches which can be present upon awakening... So if your pillow needs special care to survive a few years use, discuss with your health care provider if low oxygen levels might be responsible. The good news for your pillow (and you!) is that low oxygen levels, once identified, can be corrected.

System Update

During early summer, Thunderbird Internal Medicine will replace our current electronic health record and billing system with a new single database system called eClinicalWorks. Our practice is investing in this new product to improve efficiencies and enhance care by linking patient demographics and medical records to insurance, billing, and claims data. We thank you for your patience as we learn this system together!



Thunderbird Internal Medicine – Glendale
5620 W. Thunderbird Rd #C-1, #F-1 & #G-2
Glendale, Arizona 85306

Thunderbird Internal Medicine - Phoenix
9150 W. Indian School Rd #118
Phoenix, Arizona 85037