



the decoder **BACK-PAIN RELIEF**



05

A new mattress

TRY IT WHEN: You ache every single morning.

HOW IT WORKS: After eight or nine years, a mattress can start to provide less support, which may lead to back pain. "People who suffer from constant backaches often find relief by getting a new mattress," says Todd Sinett, a New York City chiropractor and a coauthor of *The Truth About Back Pain* (Penguin, \$15).

GOOD TO KNOW: Contrary to popular belief, a firmer mattress isn't necessarily better. Research shows that medium tension is best. Beware of those that are advertised as "orthopedic" or "doctor approved." There is no regulation for these claims. Chances are you'll just pay a heftier price than you would for a regular mattress.



A misaligned spine can cause muscle tension (read: pain).

06

Physical therapy or chiropractic treatment

TRY IT WHEN: No matter what else you do, your backaches persist. "A professional can provide relief from chronically inflamed muscles that home remedies can't," says Sinett.

HOW IT WORKS: Both types of treatment improve spinal alignment. Physical therapists strategically stretch and strengthen the muscles that help hold the spine in place. Chiropractors manipulate the spine to relieve areas of tension on the muscles. Consult your primary-care doctor for a referral.

GOOD TO KNOW: "You should experience relief within six weeks," says Sinett. If you don't, you may need an MRI, which can determine whether the pain stems from something more serious, such as a herniated disk.