

Health Hazards From Soiled Bed Linens

Undercover Trouble



You spend a third of your life in bed. Clean bed linens are a must-do chore. Launder them weekly.

Mites



You shed 500 million skin cells a day. Many slough off in your bed. Tiny dust mites feed on shed cells. Their droppings can trigger allergies, asthma, and cause eczema to flare.

Pets



Do you sleep with your pet? Animal dander on your bedding is food for dust mites. Dogs with a skin condition, mange, can spread mites that burrow under your skin. Your pets also can also pass on fungal infections. Wash your sheet at least once a week in hot water.

Bacteria



Dead skin cells, sweat, and saliva, are ideal substances to support growth of bacteria. Lab tests found that swabs from pillowcases unwashed for a week harbored 17,000 times more colonies of bacteria than samples taken from a toilet seat!

Acne



Acne may be caused due to soiled pillow covering. Embedded dirt, dead skin, and bacteria can clog skin pores. Those with acne should change pillowcases every 2-3 days and the rest of the bedding once a week.

Sheets



If you or your partner has been ill, wash sheet immediately to eliminate lingering germs. Most bacteria or viruses can survive on soft surfaces for minutes to hours. The duration varies based on the specific microbe. For example, flu viruses live on tissues for just 15 minutes, but some stomach bacteria and viruses can survive on fabrics for 4 hours.

Pillows



If your pillow can be washed, do so at least monthly. Follow the care label on how to do it. Make sure to rinse and dry it well to prevent mildew. Put a pillow protector on your pillow and wash it along with your pillowcase and pillow.

Sheets



Strip the bed weekly (or even more often) if you:

- Sleep in the nude
- Snack in bed
- Sleep with children or pets
- Sweat a lot at night

Let Your Sheets Breathe



Moisture builds in sheets after sleeping on them. Upon awakening, peel back the covers to allow the bed to dry.

Wash Day Tips



Launder your bedding with the hottest water suggested on the care label. Afterward, put them into the dryer. Studies show that the dryer's heat can kill some microbes that survive the wash. If safe for color fabrics, use a germ-killer like bleach on your sheets, especially if the sheets have been slept upon by someone who has been sick.

Dirty Duvets and More



Some comforters or duvet covers aren't machine washable. Check labels before laundering them. The following is a suggested routine to follow:

- Comforters, blankets, and duvet covers: Once every 1-2 months. (If you don't use a top sheet, wash them when you do your sheets.)
- Mattress pad: Wash at least four times a year
- Bed skirt: Wash every 3-6 months

Vacuum your mattress when you launder the bed skirt to suck away dust and dirt.

Bedbugs



Humans attract bedbugs. They live in mattresses and on linens. Bedbugs crawl out at night and feed on blood. They may leave itchy bite marks. Bedbugs can travel back with you from a hotel or dorm room. Dry your bedding on high heat for 30 minutes to kill the bugs and their eggs.