



THRIVE

Smart Bedding Choices for Better Sleep

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February 10, 2025



The right bedding materials can improve sleep quality by optimizing thermal comfort and considering breathability, durability, and personal preferences

Struggling to sleep well? You're not alone. According to a survey of 1,217 Canadian firefighters, 69% reported less than ideal quality of sleep, and 21% screened positive for clinical insomnia (Cramm et al., 2021). For optimal health and performance, aiming for rejuvenating slumber is paramount, yet it can feel elusive. One frequently overlooked solution for better sleep is making smart choices about your bedding.

The materials used in bedsheets, blankets, and bed coverings can impact skin and body temperature, and thermal comfort is crucial for refreshing sleep (Li et al., 2024). In addition to your preferred thermal comfort level, when selecting bedding components, consider their durability, softness, the season, your budget, and your inclination for natural materials. Also, take into account, "... the average temperature of your bedroom ... (and) your personal preference for ... heavier or lighter weight bedding," advises City Neustadt, sales specialist at Downright, a Brooklyn-based down bedding manufacturer. A good starting point for enhancing your bedding is making wise decisions about your sheets.

1. Bedsheets

Thread count, material, and weave impact the performance of bedsheets, contributing to a more restorative sleep.

Thread Count

The number of vertical and horizontal threads in one square inch of fabric is known as thread count. Higher thread counts usually indicate more tightly woven fibers, which often leads to increased durability, softness, and comfort. Ideal counts vary by fabric and weave, typically ranging from 200-600.

Material

Bedsheets are available in a variety of materials, with the most common being:

- **Polyester:** A synthetic fiber, polyester is strong, budget-friendly, wrinkle-resistant, and appropriate for cold sleepers (those who feel chilly throughout the night), but it lacks breathability. Microfiber, made from polyester or other synthetic materials, is known for its ultrasoft texture.
- **Cotton:** The most common bedsheets material, 100% cotton, is soft, durable, and comfortable for those who sleep hot. Organic cotton is grown without harmful chemicals. Egyptian and Pima are considered luxury options due to their strength and softness. Supima is a trademark for a Pima cotton grown in the United States. Cotton/polyester blends, though more synthetic in feel, offer greater affordability and durability. Jersey sheets, made from cotton, synthetic fibers, or blends, are stretchy, cost-effective, and best for cold sleepers and cooler climates.
- **Flannel:** Perfect for winter and those who sleep cold, flannel is thick and cozy. Composed of cotton, wool, synthetic materials, or blends, flannel is prone to pilling over time.
- **Bamboo:** Lightweight, moisture-wicking, soft, and airy, bamboo is derived from rayon, viscose, or lyocell (a plant-based fiber). According to Jill Zwarenstein, a certified sleep science coach and the senior editor for Sleep Advisor, an online sleep resource, "... if someone's a hot sleeper, bamboo is a really great cooling fabric." However, bamboo wrinkles easily, and harsh chemicals may be used in their production.
- **Silk:** Exceptionally smooth and woven from silkworm cocoons, it excels at temperature regulation. Its cool feel is suited for hot sleepers, though it is expensive and requires delicate care.
- **Linen:** Crafted from flax plant fibers, linen is long-lasting, moisture-wicking, and does not trap heat so is a good choice for those who sleep hot. While it can wrinkle easily and may feel slightly rough at first, linen softens with use.

Weave

The term "weave" describes how threads are interlaced, influencing the appearance, feel, and quality of sheets. Common weaves include:

- **Percale:** Characterized by a snug, one-over, one-under grid pattern, creating a flat, even finish, percale is made using cotton, rayon, synthetic materials, or blends. Lightweight, airy, and durable, percale is perfect for warm weather and hot sleepers but lacks coziness.
- **Sateen:** Featuring a thicker, more tightly woven pattern of one yarn under and three or four yarns over, sateen is lustrous and smooth. Made of cotton, rayon, or synthetic fibers, sateen is wrinkle-resistant and excellent for cool weather and cold sleepers but is less breathable.

2. Blankets

Besides bedsheets, selecting the right blankets can positively affect your sleep. Blankets are made from the bedsheets materials mentioned above as well as:

- **Fleece:** Cuddly, moisture-wicking, and durable, fleece is made of polyester and provides excellent insulation. However, it offers limited breathability, making it unsuitable for those who sleep hot.
- **Wool:** Insulating and moisture-wicking, wool is derived from goats, sheep, llamas, or alpacas. It can be expensive, non-hypoallergenic, scratchy, and heavy, so is not ideal for hot sleepers.
- **Down:** Crafted from the soft feathers from such waterfowl as geese and ducks, down is plush and insulating. Neustadt notes, "... larger cluster down with higher fill power will provide more warmth and protection per ounce compared to down with lesser fill power." However, down can have a higher price point, and may not be hypoallergenic. So, down alternatives made from synthetic materials might be a good substitute and are easier to clean. That said, they are not as warm, breathable, moisture-wicking, or long-lasting as down.

3. Bed Coverings

A third important bedding element for enriching sleep is your bed covering choice, with these being the most common:

- **Comforter:** Usually constructed of two layers of cotton or a polyester blend, a comforter is sewn together and filled with down, wool, cotton, or synthetic materials. Comforters are user-friendly and favored by those who sleep cool.
- **Quilt:** Made of a layer of batting between two stitched layers of fabric, a quilt is reversible and thinner than a comforter and a duvet so may not provide enough warmth for some. Additionally, a handmade quilt can be expensive.
- **Duvet:** Consisting of a removable insulating insert of cotton, wool, feather, down, or synthetic materials, a duvet's fill can shift but enhances versatility. A duvet also has a separate cover, adding to the cost, and can be challenging to put on. Providing extra warmth, a duvet is easier to wash than a comforter or a quilt.

Finally, the OEKO-TEX certification indicates the bedding is safe from toxic substances. Meanwhile, Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS) certifies textiles such as wool or cotton are organically grown.

Restorative sleep stems from making thoughtful choices. Time spent selecting quality bedding can result in time spent enjoying quality slumber.

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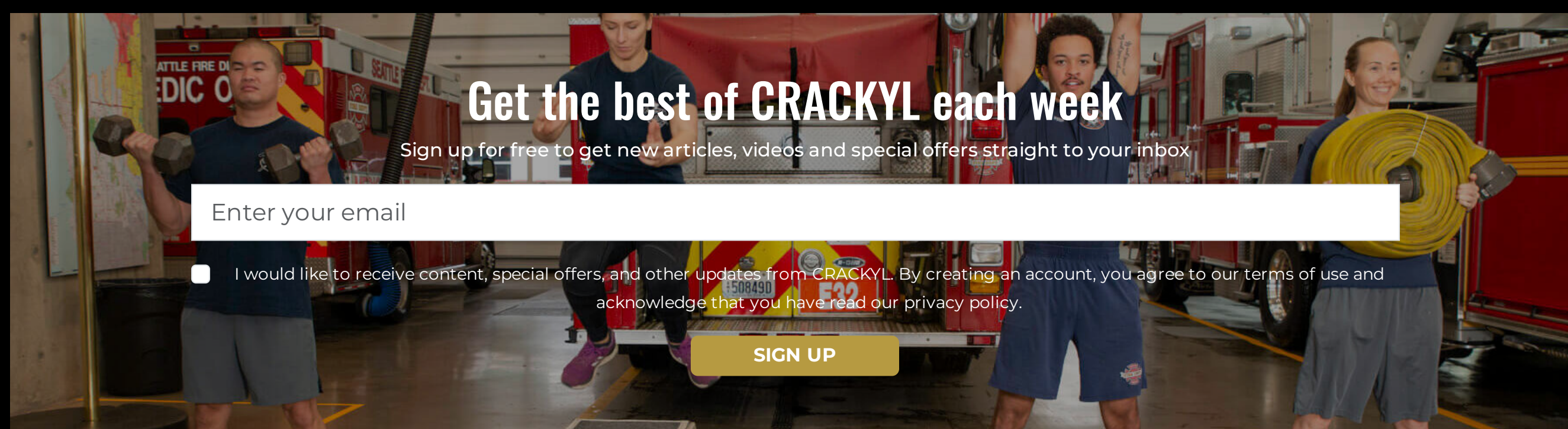
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