

Why Thread Count is not the best indicator of quality linens?

Cotton is the most widely grown textile fiber, and although different methods for growth and processing are used the basics of the plant are the same. Cotton grows on a short bush that produces round bolls that when open, reveal the white or off-white cotton to be harvested and separated from the seed (ginned). As a pure cellulose fiber, cotton maintains the best qualities of natural plant based textiles; absorbency, durability and strength.

Fibers are categorized by the length of the fiber itself, otherwise known as the staple. This is where the distinctions begin. Cotton staples can range in length from ½ inch to 2 inches. The longer the staple the stronger, finer and higher quality the fiber. The shorter staples are used in everyday "run-of-the-mill" textile goods.

Egyptian Cotton dates as one of the oldest cotton species, originating from the fertile Nile River Delta. The quality and fineness of this variety remains, making it also one of most highly demanded luxury cotton species. Egyptian cotton has become wildly popular for bedding in recent years. Why exactly? Does it really matter?

It was thought for ages that cotton was cotton and thread count was king when choosing quality sheets. That is no longer true. Consumer guidelines for buying bedding suggest that cotton from Egypt is superior to other cotton. Is this true and, if so, what is the big difference?

Egyptian cottons are used to create bedding of all types from sheets to pillowcases to comforters. The long staple or long fiber of Egyptian-grown cotton means that there is more continuous fiber to use when creating threads or yarns. This yarn is smaller in diameter yet stronger than other cottons. Smaller yarn means that more threads per square inch can be used to create stronger fabric which is light in weight yet breathes well.

More threads per inch mean that the thread count on the bedding label will be higher. Many buyers think that choosing high thread count sheets is the only gauge of quality. This is not true, but in the case of cotton grown in Egypt, the higher thread count means the fabric will be incredibly strong and will last for years and years. If cared for properly, Egyptian produced cotton fabric used for creating bedding products can last for decades.

The hand or feel of the sheets created from Egyptian grown cotton is a bit harder than other cottons when the bedding is new. However, with every single laundering, the cotton sheets from Egyptian fibers become softer and softer. Like a fine wine, age improves the Egyptian fiber cotton bedding and, unlike many products, you will prize your Egyptian fiber sheets of cotton more and more as they age and become soft and cuddly.

Cotton grown in the Egyptian fields will also produce less lint and therefore will not pill after repeated washings as some materials may do. Egyptian fiber is now considered known for its durability and luxurious feel. After all, we spend almost one-third of our lives in our beds and our bedding should be comfortable and durable.

A word of caution regarding bedding labels: if the package says "cotton rich" the actual amount of cotton, whether Egyptian or other cotton, is not stated and can be a very small amount. It is better to select products that state 100% cotton or, if choosing a blend fabric, that clearly state the exact proportion of cotton in the bedding. This will ensure your product composition is one that you will be pleased with.

If the package says "percale", this means that the thread count is at least 180 count. Many people believe that percale is a fabric type in its own right. This isn't the case at all; it simply means the thread count is 180 or more. Percale can be 100% cotton or a blend of cotton and other fibers!

So the next time you are shopping for new linens, consider the type of cotton used to create the fabric, and then consider the thread count. All fabric are NOT created equal!

Article Source: http://EzineArticles.com/?expert=Pat_Bowlin

[And Not All Fabrics are created equal by Maurice M. Christopher – ESL Teachers Board.com](#)