

A Weekend Bedroom Makeover: Time for Bed

By Laurel Kallenbach & Angela Owen

You want a bed that's healthy for both you and the environment, which means you need to be concerned about synthetics such as plastics and polyester, as well as how prone the bedding is to retaining moisture and harboring dust mites. Many people are allergic to the waste of the microscopic mites, which thrive in seldom-washed pillows and mattresses because they feed off dead skin cells. You can minimize dust mites by regularly laundering sheets and blankets in hot water and choosing wool-filled pillows and comforters because wool doesn't retain as much moisture as down, explains Angela Owen, owner of SuiteSleep.com (see "Sleep Like a Lamb," page 68.) Here are her recommendations for a healthy bed:

DO AHEAD

- Locate a natural bedding store in your area. If there isn't one, order sheets, pillows, and bedding in advance.
- Buy a natural fiber comforter or duvet, preferably a wool one.
- If your mattress or futon sits on the floor or a solid platform, get a slotted bedframe or platform that allows air circulation beneath it.
- If you need a new mattress most last ten to fifteen years - buy one filled with organic cotton or wool rather than petroleum-based foam.

FRIDAY AFTERNOON

- Take your comforter or duvet to a nontoxic dry cleaner. (If this isn't an option, air it out with the rest of the bedding on Saturday.)

SATURDAY

- Strip all bedding off your mattress and vacuum it to clean out dust mites. (Repeat Monthly.)
- Take mattress or futon outdoors in the sun for a thorough airing that helps combat the four "M's": mold, mildew, moisture and mites.
- Air the mattress pad, wool topper, featherbed and pillows in the sun. (Repeat every few weeks for healthiest results.)
- Clear away everything under your bed; it impedes the healthy flow of air, and it's bad feng shui.
- Vacuum all dust mites from under your bed. If you have a hardwood floor, mop it.

SUNDAY

- Change your sheets. Polyester traps moisture and creates static electricity, and wrinkle-free sheets are treated with formaldehyde. Switch to hemp or organic cotton sheets and wash them before use.
- Get new pillows, preferably filled with mite-repellent wool. If you want firm support or are accustomed to a contour pillow (typically made from synthetic visco-elastic or “memory foam”), choose natural, nontoxic rubber.
- Cover pillows with organic cotton protectors that prevent dust mites from burrowing into your pillow.
- Assemble your all-natural bed.