

Green Tips

Try organic or more earth friendly bedding the next time you curl up with a warm blanket.

Product Picks

- West Elm organic cotton knit throw (\$49; www.westelm.com, 888.922.4119)
- Pottery Barn organic cotton waffle-weave blanket (\$69-\$89; www.potterybarn.com, 888.779.5176)
- EcoChoices Super Soft Brushed Organic Cotton Blankets (\$129/twin; www.ecobedroom.com)
- Natural Living Shop Ingeo fiber comforter (\$99; www.amazon.com)
- Rawganique 100-percent hemp comforter (\$378/twin; www.rawganique.com, 877-RAW-HEMP)
- EcoChoices Pure Grow wool blankets (\$279/twin; www.ecobedroom.com)

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Better Blankets for Winter by Sarah Lipman

- On a cold winter night, nothing is more enjoyable than curling up in bed under a mound of blankets with a cup of hot chocolate and a good book, all of which will be much more enjoyable if those blankets aren't made with petroleum-intensive materials.
- Conventional blankets are often made from a blend of cotton and petroleum-based synthetic fabrics, such as polyester and nylon. As a crop, cotton is responsible for up to 25 percent of the insecticides used worldwide, even though it takes up a mere 3 percent of the world's farmland. Once the cotton goes through bleaching processes, which release carcinogenic dioxin into the atmosphere, manufacturers treat blankets with finishes and dyes, some of which can emit the probable human carcinogen formaldehyde.
- Fortunately, organic cotton alternatives seem to be cropping up everywhere we turn. No longer is it just for the wealthy or those greener than thou, as commercial retailers like Bed, Bath & Beyond, Pottery Barn and West Elm now offer their own certified organic cotton bedding, which is better for the planet and healthier for you. "You're not breathing in chemicals for over a third of your life, the estimated time you sleep in your bed," says Erin Johnson of ABC Carpet & Home.
- Organic cotton isn't even your only option when it comes to earth-friendly bedding. Ingeo, a brand of synthetic fibers produced by Cargill-owned NatureWorks, is made with dextrose derived from plants like soybeans and corn. Used in comforters, Ingeo is a humane alternative to down. Hemp fiber is even warmer because of its heavier weight and hollow core. It's also naturally antibacterial. Pure Grow Wool, which originated with a co-op of sheep ranchers in Sonoma County, Calif., comes from sheep that were raised humanely and without the use of pesticides. "Wool wicks moisture away from your body and it is a natural insulator, so it keeps you warm in the winter and cooler in the summer. It also is an inhospitable environment for dust mites," says interior designer Kelly LaPlante, founder of Organic Interior Design.
- When the temperature drops, keep in mind that for every degree you turn down the thermostat below 70, you'll save a whopping 320 pounds of greenhouse gas emissions if you have natural gas heat and 236 pounds if you have electric heat. Wrapping yourself up in all those blankets will warm you without warming the planet.