

# The Top 6 Fabrics You Should Avoid Wearing and Why

by [BodyEcology.com](http://BodyEcology.com)

When you pick out your clothes, you probably don't think about their toxic load on your body and the environment. But most fabrics that make our clothes, upholstery and linens are highly processed with tons of chemicals. Find out how to protect yourself.

Everyday and night we are surrounded by fabrics. From clothing to sheets on our beds to upholstery on furniture or car seats, these are the fabrics of our lives.

Fabrics are around us nearly all the time, but did you know that your material choices could either help or harm your health?

## Material World

Not that long ago, people stuck to the natural fibers: wool, cashmere, cotton, silk, linen, and hemp.

But if you take a look at your clothing labels today, you are likely to find materials like *rayon*, *polyester*, *acrylic*, *acetate* and *nylon*. And your shirts and slacks may be treated to be wrinkle-free or stain resistant.

**These technological advances in fabrics may make our lives simpler, but at what cost?**

Chemically treated natural and synthetic fabrics are a source of toxins that adversely affect your health and the health of the planet.

Here's our short list of fabrics to avoid, and the healthy ones to pick instead.

## Top 6 Toxic Fabrics

1. **Polyester** is the worst fabric you can buy. It is made from synthetic polymers that are made from esters of dihydric alcohol and terpthalic acid.
2. **Acrylic** fabrics are polycrylonitriles and may cause cancer, according to the EPA.
3. **Rayon** is recycled wood pulp that must be treated with chemicals like caustic soda, ammonia, acetone and sulphuric acid to survive regular washing and wearing.
4. **Acetate and Triacetate** are made from wood fibers called cellulose and undergo extensive chemical processing to produce the finished product.
5. **Nylon** is made from petroleum and is often given a permanent chemical finish that can be harmful.
6. **Anything static resistant, stain resistant, permanent press, wrinkle-free, stain proof or moth repellent.** Many of the stain resistant and wrinkle-free fabrics are treated with perfluorinated chemicals (PFCs), like Teflon.

## Modern Materials

Keep in mind that many fabrics (including natural fibers) undergo significant processing that often involves:

0. Detergents
  - . Petrochemical dyes
0. Formaldehyde to prevent shrinkage
0. Volatile organic compounds (VOCs)
0. Dioxin-producing bleach
0. Chemical fabric softeners

These additives are often toxic to the human body, may contain heavy metals and can pollute our environment. With these kinds of warnings, what can you do? If you are chemically sensitive or just want to surround yourself with healthy fabrics, there are new options.

Doris Brunza, a fashion designer who worked in the Garment District in New York City for 20 years, knows about finding fabrics that don't cause

reactions, because she is chemically sensitive. She points out that nearly ALL fabrics, including organic fabric, are treated with chemicals at some point during their processing. Still, some choices are better than others.

**In general, look for natural fibers like:**

- 0. Cotton
- 0. Silk
- 0. Linen
- 0. Hemp
- 0. Wool
- 0. Cashmere

**If you can, purchase and wear organic fabrics and organic clothing.**

While they still might be processed to some extent, they are often a better choice than synthetics.

Brunza also advises people to buy high quality European garments made with the finest fabrics. Expensive clothing may seem overpriced, but the quality of the raw materials is superior, and the fibers can be woven into beautiful fabrics that are soft and strong, requiring little chemical processing to make them suitable for you, the consumer. They also last you for years so are a wise purchase in the long run.

Remember to avoid chemical dry cleaning whenever possible and wash your clothes in a "green"detergent. Organic food, pure water, and natural or organic clothing can work together to enhance your wellbeing and help you live a healthier life.

Reducing your toxic load may sometimes seem like an overwhelming task, but just like any other change, make it step by step. Over time, you'll see improvement in your own life and in the world around you. Change in the world begins with you making simple changes in your own life.

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