

New bedding promises you'll be sleeping beauty

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It is a seductive idea: You go to sleep, and your pillowcase (or mattress or comforter) goes to work, nourishing your skin and improving your appearance in ways a good night's rest can't quite muster.

Call it the ultimate beauty sleep.

The bedding industry has introduced a small but growing army of pillows, sheets, blankets, comforters and mattresses made from high-tech fabrics built to perform double duty. By day they labor as bed coverings. By night they dispense minute amounts of health and beauty aids through surface contact with the skin.

The bedding comes buttressed with additives — and claims — more common to cosmetics than comforters, like seaweed mattress ticking that purports to rejuvenate skin and aloe vera pillow covers and blankets that promise to soothe skin and moisturize. And depending on the manufacturer, cop-

per-inflected pillowcases are designed to help reduce the appearance of wrinkles, fight bacteria, smite dust mites and even benefit sufferers of eczema and psoriasis.

Some dermatologists have raised questions about the efficacy of the products and their claims.

"I think the idea of putting an active ingredient in clothes or bedding is interesting," said Dr. Leslie Baumann, the director of the University of Miami Cosmetic Medicine and Research Institute. "But the companies haven't usually done the studies that we expect to see to make their claims."

Another sticking point is the choice of ingredients used in the product.

"It is important that they have been proven to work," Baumann said. "We know, for example, that aloe vera is good for sensitive skin and gets rid of redness. But with marine algae there is no data for what it claims to do."

Indeed, aloe vera is the bedding industry's go-to botanical ingredient, found

in products like Natura World's latex-filled, wool-lined pillow with an aloe vera cotton cover (\$77) and Hollandia International's aloe kangaroo blanket (\$150), which claims to regulate moisture and neutralize irritation and has pouches to keep the hands and feet warm. Mattress makers from giants like Serta to boutique companies like Park Place Corp. in Greenville, S.C., sell mattresses with aloe vera ticking.

Unlike soy protein and sea algae, which are woven into the fabric, aloe vera is usually housed in microcapsules, which are bound tightly to the bedding fabric during the finishing process.

"The microbeads release the aloe when they're crushed by the weight of your body," said Edwin Shoffner, the vice president of sales for Park Place, which uses aloe vera ticking on a high-end visco memory foam mattress, priced from \$1,499 for a queen set.

A similar technique is used in the ticking for the company's aromatherapy mattress, which releases a light lavender scent designed to promote relaxation. The fabrics deliver their benefits for at least five years, Shoffner said.

