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# If You Don't Use a Top Sheet, You Are a Monster

By [Samantha Leal](#) | Jan 05, 2019 @ 5:00 am



Even as someone who travels a lot, my favorite place to be is in my own bed. I love sleep, and I make my bed as cozy as possible. (My entire apartment feels like a soft hug when you walk into it, actually, but we're here to talk beds.) The squishiest comforter, the softest sheets, pillows that make you want to cocoon yourself up but never bother turning into a butterfly; this is a bed made for sweet, sweet dreams. Crucially, it is made with two sheets: a fitted sheet and — I can't believe I have to spell this out — also a top sheet.

But lately, I've noticed a pattern among my friends' apartments, the beds of men I'm seeing, and even social media campaigns that seem to be targeted to me and my everlasting love of bed. The top sheet has been rendered unwanted. Cast aside, or not even bought, the rectangular sheet free of elastic corners that used to make up one crucial half of a set is no longer loved, included, or wanted. And this isn't just a fluke or lack of paying attention to the laundry loads. According to a poll on home-design website Houzz, nearly 40% of people aren't using a top sheet.

I don't want to play into the idea that millennials are killing everything, but it sure is starting to look like we've sent our top sheets the way of canned tuna and retirement savings. But is that smart?

If you live like most Americans — no, no it is not. During the night, you shed dead skin cells, skin oils, skin yeast, bacteria, and saliva. According to dermatologist Tsippora Shainhouse, MD, sleeping on a collection of these substances can trigger acne or folliculitis, propagate body and scalp odor, and if you're a night sweater, well, it's even worse — your bed will be even dirtier. What's especially bad: Dust mites live in the folds of your bedding and snack on dead skin cells, and are a common source of indoor allergies. "If you wake up feeling stuffy every day, consider washing your sheets more often. Switching to hypoallergenic pillowcases and mattress covers may also help," say the experts at Molly Maid.

Most experts recommend washing your sheets at least once every two weeks, with once a week being the ideal. If you're the average American, you're barely washing your sheets once a month. And your body isn't only shedding onto your bottom sheet, of course. Your flakes, cells, and dirt make it everywhere in that damn bed, and going top-sheetless just means more dirt is getting in the stuff you're washing less often. (Are you disgusted with yourself yet?)

If you're washing your sheets as recommended, and washing your duvet cover or comforter each time, too, you're fine. But, and I ask this with love, are you, *really*? Duvet covers are notoriously difficult to finagle on and off, despite their being little more than an oversized pillowcase. I know I groan every time it's time to wash mine. If you're washing yours once a week, good for you. But I have an inkling many of us — myself included — are not. And if you're using a top sheet, you don't have to.

Europeans are known to eschew the top sheet, sure, but here's the thing: Europeans also tend to flip their duvets. This means they let their beds "breathe" by hanging their comforters, and letting them air out a bit before re-making the bed at night. This is not a common practice in the U.S., but if you've got the outdoor space to take it up, bless — sunshine is a great natural disinfectant.

Jeff Chapin, co-founder and chief of product at [Casper](#) (yes, they make sheets, and they come in a set, thank you very much) has a great point beyond the no-top-sheet hygiene problem. "Not only does it allow your duvet cover to stay cleaner, but it also provides layering which helps you better regulate temperature," he says. Clean *and* cozy: now that sounds like the way to sleep.

If you still want to ditch the top sheet, fine. Just know there is more washing in your future. (If you thought half as many sheets meant half as much laundry, I sincerely hope you're rethinking your entire life right about now.) "If you choose not to use the top sheet, you can consider your duvet cover the equivalent of a top sheet, and it should similarly be cleaned every one to two weeks to maintain cleanliness," says Chapin. "The duvet itself can be washed one to two times per year." In other words: You can do you, and not be gross about it. There, now isn't that better?