

OUTER BEAUTY | February 4, 2012
SILK PILLOWCASES

Better Beauty Sleep

A simple switch from cotton to silk cases pampers your face and combats bedhead

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By ALEKSANDRA CRAPANZANO

Small luxuries are sometimes necessary to combat the inevitable wintertime blues. Recently, I turned to silk pillows for a little pampering. A silly indulgence, I thought to myself—until that first night when I fell asleep in a blissful silk cocoon. That dreamy sleep would have been enough to push chilly-weather doldrums aside, but it was waking the following morning that made me a convert. No static, no frizz, no creases etched into my cheeks—something magic was clearly at work. After a week, I'd tossed my morning makeup routine and my bottle of hair serum. I also ordered a second set of silk shams, realizing it would be very hard indeed to go back to cotton pillowcases.

Manhattan dermatologist Francesca Fusco explains: "Because silk is so smooth, it will not make crease marks on your face. Because it's hypoallergenic, it won't cause irritation. And because silk does not retain moisture, it won't wick moisture or your anti-aging cream away from your skin." That certainly helps justify the price, as does the knowledge that silk is largely resistant to mold, mildew and dust mites. This means that when properly cared for (read: dry cleaning or hand-washing), silk bedding can last for many years. But the benefits don't stop there. By providing a drier environment, silk reduces that Kafkaesque tendency a nice blowout has of morphing into a nest of frizz overnight. And as hair glides over silk (as opposed to creating friction with cotton), it is also less prone to forming knots and tangles. There's speculation that the amino acids in silk lend proteins to the skin and hair. The British Journal of Dermatology published a study concluding that wearing silk is calming to the skin of children with eczema.

According to Chinese legend, silk was discovered around 3000 B.C. by Lady Hsi-Ling-Shi, wife of the Emperor Huang Ti, while she was having tea in her garden under a mulberry tree. A silkworm dropped into her cup and the cocoon unraveled into the most delicate of threads. She lifted these out of her brew

with chopsticks and, seeing their beauty, asked her entourage to weave them into a garment. And so, a closely guarded secret was born. For more than 2,000 years, silk was reserved for emperors and the highest of dignitaries, and smuggling silkworms out of China was a crime punishable by death. Thankfully, not so anymore.

I set out on an experiment to test some of the very best silk cases. After awaking from several dreamy night's sleeps, I had a few favorites.



When properly cared for, silk bedding can last for many years.

1. *The Softie*

Kumi Kookoon, a California company specializing in silk bedding, uses "Grade A" mulberry silk (their silkworms are fed only mulberry leaves, just as those of Lady Hsi-Ling-Shi). I found their hand-stretched shams to be incomparably soft and their silk-filled pillows cloudlike. 100% Mulberry Silk Charmeuse Classic Standard Sham, \$140, kumikookoon.com