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**LIFE**

Saturday, Oct. 24, 2009

# Sleep easy thanks to high-tech mattresses

By Mary Beth Breckenridge  
Akron Beacon Journal

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If you haven't shopped for a mattress in a while, you're in for an awakening.

Bed and mattress makers have come up with all kinds of innovations that promise more comfort and better sleep -- or at least some fun bells and whistles.

The new products are evidence that the bedding industry hasn't taken the recession lying down.



Here's some of what those manufacturers have to offer.

**TEMPERATURE REGULATION:** Research shows temperature is an important factor in how well we sleep, so a number of mattress makers are developing products designed to keep sleepers cooler.

Italian manufacturer Magniflex, for example, makes mattresses from Eco Green memory foam, a plant-based foam that reacts to body weight. That's different from most viscoelastic memory foam, which is activated by body heat and therefore feels too warm to some people.

Israel-based Hollandia International is relying on fabric in its bid to help its customers keep their cool. It recently introduced a mattress covered in a three-dimensional fabric made in an open-weave design to improve air flow.

Another innovation is a temperature-controlled mattress cover being developed by Chili Technology. The temperature is regulated by water flowing through silicone tubes embedded about 1½ inches below the surface.

**GEL BEDS:** Gel is one of the hottest trends in mattresses, said Dale Read, president of the Specialty Sleep Association, a trade organization that specializes in newer-technology bedding. The gel is used as a cushioning material over the bed's support structure, which could be foam or traditional springs. The gel is rubbery -- think firm Jell-O -- and forms the walls of a honeycomblike structure that cushions and supports the body.

Manufacturers tout its ability to cradle pressure points such as shoulders and hips while maintaining the spine's alignment.

**SLEEPING GREEN:** Consumers are increasingly interested in the environment, and bedding manufacturers are listening. Most offer some sort of green option, said Karin Mahoney, director of communications for the International Sleep Products Association.

For some manufacturers, that might mean a renewed focus on natural latex. For others, it might mean incorporating natural, renewable fibers such as soy and bamboo.

**ADD-ONS:** Sometimes, it's not the structure or major features of a mattress that get attention. It's the extras.

Take, for example, Magniflex's aromatherapy mattress. Tiny capsules of lavender essential oil, a natural sedative, are embedded in the fibers of the mattress cover. Every time the bed is used, friction from the body breaks some of the capsules.

Another Magniflex mattress is covered on one side with cashmere and the other with silk. Bits of silver are embedded within the cover to dissipate static electricity and kill bacteria.

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