

## **Sustainable and efficient laundering of healthcare bedding: a best practice guide**

Healthcare laundries are under growing pressure to reduce operating costs while meeting ambitious sustainability targets. Every item of linen passes through a continuous cycle of laundering, drying, handling, distribution and use, consuming time, labour, water and energy. Improving laundry efficiency has therefore

become an important way to reduce energy and water consumption, as well as optimise staff time. Choosing healthcare bedding that has been designed with laundry operations in mind can help to reduce resource consumption, streamline workflows and lower long-term operating costs.

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### **Are there more sustainable options for healthcare bedding?**

Sustainability and operational efficiency often go hand in hand, as many of the measures that reduce water, energy and labour requirements also lower operating costs. Unfortunately, there is no single route to more sustainable healthcare bedding use. Instead, organisations should consider the entire lifecycle of a textile, including manufacture, laundering and replacement. Durable textiles that withstand repeated washing can help to reduce waste and replacement rates, while lightweight materials can reduce laundry loads, lowering water and energy consumption. Additionally, bedding that dries quickly or eliminates the need for ironing can further reduce resource use throughout the laundering process. Eliminating the need for ironing also removes a common bottleneck in the laundry process, helping to increase throughput and improve operational efficiency.

### **How can healthcare laundries reduce resource-intensive processes?**

Healthcare laundries consume substantial amounts of water, energy and labour to maintain a continuous supply of clean linen. Every stage of the process contributes to operating costs, so even small improvements in efficiency can deliver significant savings over time. However, not all laundry processes consume resources equally. Drying and finishing are among the most energy-intensive stages, while ironing also requires dedicated equipment, maintenance and staff time. Commercial flatwork ironers alone account for around 12 % of the energy consumption in a typical commercial laundry facility, making them one of the largest individual energy users in the laundering process. Reducing or eliminating this resource-intensive step can therefore significantly lower energy consumption, increase laundry throughput and reduce operational costs.

## Can healthcare bedding be laundered without ironing?

Conventional woven sheets typically require ironing after washing to remove creases and restore their appearance. Knitted healthcare bedding offers a different approach; the inherent flexibility of knitted fabrics allows them to recover their shape naturally after laundering, removing the need for ironing to achieve a smooth appearance. Eliminating this processing step can reduce energy use, simplify laundry operations and increase throughput. This can also negate the costs associated with purchasing, operating and maintaining ironing equipment.

## How can bed remakes be reduced?

Every time a sheet comes loose or becomes excessively creased, staff must spend time remaking the bed to keep the bedding securely in place. Poor fit is particularly likely to become an issue on dynamic and pressure-redistributing mattresses, where the support surface moves as it alleviates pressure. In these cases, bedding should accommodate the movement of the mattress without interfering with its function. A well-fitting sheet that moves with the support surface is also less likely to become displaced, helping to minimise bed remakes. Reducing the number of bed remakes can allow more efficient use of staff time while also extending textile lifespans.

## What characteristics support efficient and sustainable healthcare laundering?

Choosing healthcare bedding is a balance between patient comfort, clinical performance and long-term operating costs. Although purchase price is an important consideration, the characteristics that influence day-to-day efficiency often have a much greater impact on the expenses when summed over the lifetime of a textile:

- Durable fabrics that withstand repeated laundering can reduce replacement rates and textile waste.
- Fast-drying materials shorten processing times and improve laundry throughput, while textiles that eliminate ironing reduce energy consumption and simplify laundry operations.
- Well-fitting bedding can reduce bed remakes, lowering staff workloads and minimising wear.

## How can SleepKnit® Smart sheets help to streamline healthcare laundry efficiency?

SleepKnit® Smart Sheets have been developed specifically for healthcare environments, employing a carefully selected blend of fibres that ensures durability to withstand repeated laundering. Unlike conventional woven sheets, the knitted construction of these sheets allows the fabric to stretch and recover in multiple directions, moving with the mattress rather than restricting its movement. This helps the sheets remain securely in place, reducing bed remakes without interfering with the function of dynamic and pressure-redistributing mattresses.

The lightweight, fast-drying construction of SleepKnit® Smart Sheets also eliminates the need for ironing, reducing one of the most resource-intensive stages of linen processing. Together, these characteristics can lower energy consumption, simplify laundry operations and decrease the total linen management costs.

**Learn more about how  
SleepKnit® Smart Sheets**