



CARE LABEL — DOWN AND FEATHER PRODUCTS

Washing vs. Dry Cleaning

Many companies and consumers are perplexed about care labels for down and feather products. IDFL offers the following information.

Is Dry Cleaning or Washing better for the down & feather filling?

For the down & feather filling itself, washing is the better cleaning process for the following reasons:

- Down is very resilient. High temperatures and mild detergent do not affect the structure and performance of down.
- The process of washing and tumble drying maintain the “puffiness” and Fill Power performance of down. Fill Power is one measure of insulation quality for down. Good Fill Power is maintained and improved by moisture, heat, and air circulation. The washing and tumbling process adds moisture, heat, and air circulation to the down.
- Dry Cleaning may remove necessary fat & oils which can lower resiliency of down and possibly make the down more brittle. Water and mild soaps can remove sweat and sweat residues, salts and other material found in the fill material after long use (source: Rainer Weckmann, Hohenstein Institute, Germany).

Are there cases when down products should be dry-cleaned?

The fabric is the most important consideration in the decision. If the shell fabric can only be dry-cleaned, then the down product should be dry-cleaned. The consumer should discuss the cleaning with a reputable dry-cleaning professional who has experience cleaning down products.

General Guides for different products

- **Pillows:** Pillows are the easiest product to wash in a home washer, unless the fabric requires dry cleaning. The problem is proper drying. A pillow may take hours to dry.
- **Comforters:** Large comforters may not fit in most home washers. They should be washed in a large scale laundromat washer or taken to a professional cleaner for washing.
- **Jackets and Vests:** Jackets and vests can successfully be washed, unless the fabric will not allow it. Again proper drying is critical.
- **Featherbeds:** These are too large to be cleaned at home. These should be taken to a professional who can help determine the best method of cleaning.

Are there alternatives to washing and dry-cleaning?

- The use of duvet covers reduces the need for frequent cleaning.
- Spot cleaning is a good idea for large comforters and feather beds.
- The European habit of regular shaking and airing out comforters can maintain loft.

What is the best possible care label instruction?

- There is no one best answer to this question.
- Warm water washing with mild soap and tumble drying until COMPLETELY DRY is ideal but does not work in many cases because of fabric type or size of the product.
- The best thing for a consumer to do is to discuss cleaning with a cleaning professional.