

Bamboo Fabric - The Long & Short of It

The Short

There's been a lot of talk about Bamboo and "how green it really is" lately. We at Belly Bandit prefer to stay out of opinion and stick to the facts.

Bamboo as a plant is naturally pest-resistant, grows incredibly fast and can actually help rebuild eroded soil. It takes just three or four years to go from seed to harvest and because the root network is so big, you don't even need to replant - it just shoots right back up again.

Bamboo fabric, on the other hand, can be touted as "organic" while mills pump out toxic solvents and emissions. Please be rest assured, our **Oeko-certified** mill produces bamboo fiber via an advanced **closed loop** solvent spinning process, which has minimal impact on the environment and an economical use of energy and water. The solvent is continually **recycled** during the production process. So, production plant **emissions** into the air from smokestacks and from waste water are significantly lower in comparison to many other man-made fiber operations. The solvent to digest the bamboo pulp can be toxic, but utilizing the closed loop process, this solvent is carefully reused and not thrown into local water systems. It's also important to note that products made from bamboo can be **recycled**, incinerated or digested in sewage. The fiber will usually degrade completely in just eight days in waste treatment plants.

Going green can be overwhelming. We get it. But it's about what we can do, and any step toward a greener world is a step in the right direction.

The Long

Yes, it's true. Bamboo fabric uses a chemical process to turn its cellulosic [fibers](#) into fabric. And yes, it's also true that the process is similar to rayon production and is, in fact, considered a sub-category of rayon. The production of rayon has been in existence since the mid 1800's and since then has undergone much iteration. More recently, new processes have been developed which enable plant-based fibers (such as bamboo) to be utilized in the production of fabric.

Some companies, such as ours, produce bamboo fiber via what's called an advanced "closed loop" solvent spinning process, which has minimal impact on the environment and an economical use of energy and water. The solvent is continually recycled during the production process. So, production plant emissions into the air from smokestacks and from [waste water](#) are significantly lower in comparison to many other man-made fiber operations. The solvent to digest the bamboo pulp can be toxic, but utilizing the closed loop process, this solvent is carefully reused and not thrown into local water systems. It's also important to note that products made from bamboo can be recycled, incinerated or digested in sewage. The fiber will usually degrade completely in just eight days in waste treatment plants.

So where does that leave us? Unfortunately, the truth is that 99% of all products we consume, even the eco friendly ones, have some negative environmental impact. Given this, it often comes down to a choice between the lesser of two evils when it comes to purchasing products. We all know how great bamboo is to grow, but do we all know how bad cotton is to grow? Cotton uses approximately 25% of the world's insecticides; seven out of ten of these are among the most [toxic chemicals](#) on earth. It takes 1/3 of a pound of chemical fertilizers to produce just one pound of cotton (essentially one t-shirt). This exerts an enormous toll on the earth's air, water and soil and impacts the [health](#) of people working in this industry and in cotton growing regions. Even organic cotton has drawbacks.

In comparison, bamboo requires NO fertilizer, pesticides or chemicals to grow, being that it is one of the fastest growing plants on the planet. In addition, it has no harmful residues left on it from the non-sustainable, chemically damaging cultivation that cotton requires. In terms of [carbon dioxide](#), bamboo consumes 45% more carbon than a similar stand of trees. It is for these reasons many consider bamboo to be an

environmentally viable alternative to cotton. So does bamboo fabric have some drawbacks? Of course! But just consider what product does not? The answer to that may just be donning your birthday suit and going "au natural" — and that's the naked truth.

And, the Bamboo bashing is all coming from the Cotton Growers who are seeing their numbers plummet as manufacturers are coming up with new fibers to use. Even organic cotton takes TREMENDOUS resources, tons of water, not to mention the gasoline needed to fuel the machines to pick the cotton. And, the decrease in use of pesticides to grow organic cotton has now brought back the Boll Weevil which is now decimating crops in Texas to the point where they are going to have to use Malathion in Texas on all crops to get the pest problem under control. This will ruin the fields and organic farming will be destroyed in this area for a minimum of 3 to 5 years as the soil must be free from the toxins in order to be able to be used for organic crops.