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## NF00-421 Sewing with Microfibers

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## Sewing with Microfibers

*Rose Marie Tondl, Extension Clothing Specialist*

What is microfiber fabric? Microfiber fabric is made from very fine fibers. The smaller the number the finer the fiber. Silk has a fiber size of 1.25 denier, microfibers would be less than a 1.0 denier. These fine fibers were first developed in Japan in the 1980's. They are spun from polyester, nylon, rayon, acetate or a blend of any of the above. Microfibers are densely woven, strong, water resistant, soft and drapable. They have good stability and shape retention.

### **Patterns**

Choose patterns with simple lines and not a lot of detail. Unstructured garments are best. You can't get sharp, crisp seams like you do with cotton, linen and wool. If the fabric is 100% microfiber, it will not ease well for set-in sleeves. Instead consider shirt sleeves, kimono, raglan, dolman or cap sleeves. Gathers, soft pleats and cowl necklines are good choices.

### **Preshrink**

Before you start your project, preshrink the fabric in cold or warm water and machine dry on permanent press setting. Avoid dryer sheets as they leave oily spots; instead use a liquid fabric softener.

### **Layout/Cutting**

Use a "with nap" layout. Select sharp, very fine pins and pin into the seam allowances. Cut with sharp shears or a rotary cutter and cutting mat. For woven microfibers, cut the fabric just slightly off grain (about 10%) to reduce puckering in the seams, which makes it easier to press them flat.

### **Marking**

Mark fabric using any of the following: wax-free tracing paper, chalk, fabric markers or thread basting using silk thread. Test your markers on a scrap of fabric.

### **Interfacing**

Select fusible types that bond at low temperatures. Test interfacing on scraps of fabric. Woven polyester organza is a good choice.

### **Needles**

Use sewing machine needles that have a sharp point to pierce the fabric and give a better stitch. Sizes 60/8, 65/9 or 70/10 are good choices. For microfiber knits use stretch needles. Change needles often as they dull quickly because of the tightly woven fabric.

### **Sewing**

Set the stitch length at 2 to 2.5 mm or 10 to 12 stitches per inch. Avoid puckered seams by filling the bobbin on a slow speed. Use a fine machine embroidery thread or extra fine, long staple polyester thread. When stitching, hold the fabric taut. If available for your sewing machine, use a straight stitch presser foot and a straight stitch throat plate to hold fabric firm. If using a wide spaced presser foot, moving the needle to the far left position may help in the sewing process. The needle is able to penetrate the fabric easier and won't pull the fabric into the needle hole. If using the serger, use wooly nylon in the loopers to prevent thread imprints from showing on the right side of fabric.

### **Seam Finishes**

Seam finishes are important since the fabric ravel quite a bit. There are several options to use on plain seams. Choices include using sharp pinking shears, binding with nylon sheer bias tape or using a two-thread serger. Making flat felled seams is another way to handle the raw edges.

### **Pressing**

Press with a dry, moderate heat on a polyester setting. Test on fabric scraps and adjust the temperature, if needed. Before pressing a seam open, press the seam as stitched. Press on the right side using a press cloth. If a serger was used to finish the seams, use paper under the seams or a seam stick to prevent serger stitches from making ridges on the right side.

### **Hemming**

Hem garments by hand or machine or use a lightweight fusible tape. Experiment with different hemming techniques so you have the finished look you want.

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