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Keeping your cool

Technology offers some solutions for surviving the sweltering days of summer

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Summer presents a dressing dilemma to many people: There might be a 25-degree rise in temperature from the time you leave your house to the time you arrive at work — and then if your office is air-conditioned, there might be an even steeper drop once you step inside.

The solution is to start wearing some of the new fabrics that help regulate body temperature.

"Cool and comfortable means moisture control," says Renee DeLack Hultin, president of Nano-Tex Americas, which develops treatments to change how fabrics behave. In the summer, humidity stifles skin's ability to "breathe," so the perspiration just sits on the skin. And in the winter, perspiration gets trapped under the layers of clothes needed to protect skin from the elements. Moisture is what makes the body feel hot or cold, Hultin says.

Polyester is one of the biggest moisture offenders — it actually repels water — so if someone starts to sweat there's nowhere for it to go other than down the wearer's back. But the synthetic fabric has other qualities that manufacturers and shoppers covet — it's easy to care for, travels well and is a good weight for year-round wear.

Nano-Tex developed a treatment that encourages polyester to accept moisture. "We make it water-loving. It'll pick up moisture, disperse it and dry quicker. People want the best of both worlds," Hultin says.

The technology was first used on outdoor gear but now is offered on standard weekend and corporate casual styles. Nano-Tex's similar Coolest Comfort treatment is available for wrinkle-free cotton garments and resin-treated knits because those fabrics also block moisture absorption.

Regular cotton will absorb moisture but the fabric becomes heavy and sags when it reaches its saturation point, notes Hultin, who predicts a treatment for that isn't far off. In the meantime, here's a look at some products that are available to help keep you cool this summer.



Cool suits

Hot and sticky weather forecasts demand cool and lightweight work wear. But most guys are smothered in 9-to-5 layers — dress shirt, bulky jacket, choking tie and often a T-shirt underneath to sop up the sweat. To the rescue: the new Stays Cool suit, from Bagir Ltd., which uses Smart Fabric Technology first developed for NASA.

The wool blend suits contain Thermocules, microencapsulated materials — think Ping-Pong balls as tiny as 1/20th the width of a

human hair — that absorb, store and release body heat. On scorchers, the material should reduce your need to sweat.

When the workday's done, kick back in Dockers Thermal Adapt Khakis and Gold Toe's Coolmax or All Day Comfort socks, which boast the same space-age technology.

Stays Cool suits, in four shades and two- or three-button styles, are available exclusively at Jos. A. Banks stores for \$595 (on sale for \$399 on their Web site, www.josbanks.com).

— JOSEPH V. AMODIO

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