

Rayon, the oldest man-made fiber

Rayon is the oldest of the man-made fibers and is the most widely used.

Unlike most man-made fibers, rayon is not synthetic. It is made from cellulose obtained by chemically treated cotton linters and wood pulp. Rayon therefore does not have the heat sensitivity of synthetic fibers such as polyester, acrylic and nylon.

There are two major types of rayon produced today:

1. **Regular Rayon.** The term **viscose** is often applied to regular rayon. The distinguishing property of regular rayon is the weakness of the yarn when it is wet. Regular rayon is often sized to stabilize the yarn. Contact with water can weaken the yarn as much as 50 percent and produce shrinkage as high as 10 percent.
2. **High Wet Modulus.** HWM is a modified rayon that has virtually the same properties as regular rayon, plus high wet strength.

Rayon can be made into fine fibers (**Micro-fibers**) from either regular or HWM rayon.

Fabric problems

Rayon is subject to many problems due to the limitations of sizing used and weakness of the yarn. Most fabric problems occur in **viscose** or **regular rayon**.