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Self-Cleaning Gym Gear Targets Bacteria, Sweat

By [Kyle Stack](#)  February 1, 2011 | 2:10 pm | Categories: [Apparel](#), [Fitness](#)



Sanitization at the gym has moved beyond wiping down the bench or bike with a towel and disinfectant. It's gravitating toward self-cleaning equipment that wipes sweat away and keeps people protected from harmful bacteria.

A Pittsburgh-based company is making sure gym-goers have that kind of access to the equipment on which they might sweat the most. SilverSport, a brand derived from Eco Product Group, offers a workout towel, a Pilates roller and a yoga mat with what it calls its [Silver Clean Zone](#). Each product represents one of those zones by using Terra Silver to eliminate more than 650 types of surface-borne, odor-causing bacteria.

Thomas Davis, president of Eco Product Group, told [Wired.com](#) that nanosilver particles — up to 20,000 times smaller than the width of a human hair — are to thank for the equipment's odor-killing prowess.

“The material [in the products] is silver,” Davis said. “Silver happens to be a natural anti-microbial. It fights bacteria naturally.”

When activated by moisture — in this case, sweat — the nanosilver particles bind to the surface to rid the product of bacteria. That’s why even though the towel doesn’t *technically* have to be washed, its functionality is enhanced by running it through the washer. “Hypothetically, you don’t need to wash the towel” for it to eliminate bacteria, Davis said, before pointing out that people will understandably want to wash it regularly to eliminate surface dirt.

In testing the products, we found the towel (which retails for \$35) to be surprisingly thin yet effective. The non-graphic side is as soft as one can hope for in a towel, although the graphic portion — covered in the SilverSport logo — is slightly rough against the skin. Unlike conventional towels, it didn’t stink after being thoroughly used during a drenching workout, and it held up quite well after a pair of washings.

The roller (\$40) and the mat (\$50) work well enough, although more experienced users of Pilates rollers and yoga mats can make a more educated comparison against similar products. The yoga mat is thick and has a fairly sticky surface that promotes traction even when the user is sweating.

Davis noted the R&D process took three to four years before the products were released last year. “We didn’t want to get into the marketplace with this kind of microbial until we were sure that it was something that would sustain it,” Davis said.

The towel’s material is woven in the US and sent to a dye house for color. The treated material is then submitted for testing, which ensures the nanosilver particles are engaged. Various forms of bacteria are applied to make sure the Terra Silver works, and once approved, the material moves to the manufacturing department. Everything is approved and registered by the EPA.

Davis envisions the SilverSport brand expanding to products for use in NFL locker rooms and other sports, including tennis, baseball and gymnastics. But for now, weightlifters and yoga enthusiasts alike can sweat all they want.

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