

# THE DEFINITIVE GUIDE TO STAIN REMOVAL



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## WHAT TO DO

- Remove any solids with a blunt knife, and blot liquids with white kitchen paper.
- Apply stain remover to a small, unseen area and wait 5–10 minutes. If the fabric reacts, or if in doubt, seek dry-cleaning advice. Avoid treating delicate or expensive fabrics, or those that require dry-cleaning only.
- Don't over-soak the fabric with a cleaning agent. To avoid making a ring mark, use a soft, absorbent cloth to apply the cleaning agent and work in a circular motion from the outside inwards. Dab, rather than rub, because rubbing can damage the fabric and it can also spread the stain.

## PERSONAL

**Blood:** Soak in cold water with either biological detergent or salt added; or rub in a paste of bicarb and cold water, leave to dry and brush off. Wash in heavy-duty detergent (biological if possible).

**Make-up:** Work in biological liquid detergent; wash as usual.

**Perspiration:** Sponge with white vinegar, rinse and soak in salt solution or biological detergent. Soften old stains with glycerine. Rinse and wash as usual.

**Urine:** Rinse in cold water; dab with hydrogen peroxide solution, or soak in biological detergent; rinse and wash as usual.

**Vomit:** Rinse under running cold water; soak in a sterilising solution, or biological detergent with some disinfectant added; wash as usual.

## FOOD AND DRINKS

**Chocolate:** Rinse in cold water; apply biological liquid detergent and soak overnight if necessary; wash in suitable detergent.

**Coffee:** Soak in lukewarm water, use a pre-wash treatment and wash in heavy-duty detergent.

**Egg:** Sponge with cold salty water and wash in heavy-duty detergent (biological if possible).

**Gravy:** Soak in biological detergent and cold water; wash as usual.

**Grease:** Cover with bicarb, leave for an hour or so and brush off; soak in liquid detergent, if necessary, and wash in water as hot as the fabric allows. Use biological detergent if possible.

**Milk and fruit juice:** Rinse in cold water, then soak in liquid detergent and wash in water as hot as the fabric allows. Use biological detergent if possible.

**Oil/salad dressings:** Blot and dab gently with biological liquid detergent; or sprinkle with bicarb to absorb grease, brush off and soak in washing-up liquid. Wash as normal.

**Tea:** Soak in lukewarm water, use a pre-wash treatment and wash in heavy-duty detergent; or dab with lemon juice, rinse and wash in biological detergent; or pour white vinegar solution over the stain, leave for 10 minutes and wash as usual.

**Tomato sauce:** Dab gently with biological liquid detergent and wash as usual; or rinse in cold water, dab with white vinegar, rinse and wash as usual.

**Wine:** For red wine, pour soda water over the stain, blot, cover with salt and leave for 30 minutes. Soak in cold water; sponge with detergent (biological if possible). For white wine, rinse in warm water and dab with biological liquid detergent (white vinegar for silk and wool). Rinse and wash as normal. On upholstery and carpets, cover with salt, leave to absorb and then brush off. Dab with warm water and biological detergent and then with cold water.

## MISCELLANEOUS

**Grass:** Dab with methylated spirits and rinse off with warm soapy water. Use a pre-wash treatment and wash in heavy-duty detergent.

**Ink** (ballpoint or felt tip): Dab with methylated spirits; rinse and sponge with biological liquid detergent; wash as usual. If stain persists, treat as rust.

**Mildew:** Bleach white fabrics, or soak, then wash in heavy-duty detergent (with bleach).

**Rust:** Dab with lemon juice, cover with salt, leave for an hour; rinse and wash as usual.

**Tar:** Pour on a little eucalyptus oil, then dab with more eucalyptus oil, using kitchen paper; dampen and rub with washing-up liquid; rinse and wash in biological detergent in water as hot as the fabric allows.

THE MOST IMPORTANT FACTOR IN ATTACKING STAINS IS TO ACT SWIFTLY.

THE NEWER THE STAIN, WHETHER GREASY OR NON-GREASY, OR A COMBINATION OF THE TWO, THE EASIER IT WILL BE TO REMOVE WITHOUT DAMAGE.

First and foremost, check what processes and cleaning agents are suitable for the stained item. For example, wool and silk should not be washed in biological detergent and often need to be treated differently from cotton and synthetics.

Likewise, bear in mind that whites may need to be treated differently from coloureds. In any case, always check for colourfastness before soaking. Chemical treatment may damage old or worn fabric.

## CLEANING KIT

### Bicarbonate of soda

Use this – or cornflour or talcum powder – to absorb grease and oil.

### Detergents

Biological/non-biological/heavy-duty. Don't use biological detergent, or any other enzyme-based cleaner, on wool or silk.

### Eucalyptus oil

Available from essential oils section of major chemists. Good for greasy stains.

### Hydrogen peroxide

Ask your chemist for 3%, which is 10 volume strength (VS). Don't use on wool or silk.

### Methylated spirits

Available from diy stores. Apply with cotton-wool buds. Don't use on fabric containing acetate or triacetate.

### Pre-wash treatments

Some of these are formulated to treat a whole raft of common stains, some are more specific. Follow the instructions on the container.

### White distilled vinegar

Use as a solution of 15ml vinegar to 300ml water (3 tsp to ½ pint).

### White spirit

Available from diy stores. Good for paint and grease.

## SAFETY NOTE

Some of the cleaning agents you will need contain chemicals that are poisonous or flammable, so always read the label carefully and store them away from children. For safety, work in a well-ventilated area.