

# Consumer stain removal guide

## Stain removal kit

Immediate response is the key to successful stain removal – keep these home remedies handy.

- Talcum powder or salt – to soak up excess moisture. (Salt is good for removing tea or coffee stains from a cup – put a half-teaspoon of salt on a damp cloth and rub into the stain.)
- An enzyme detergent – most laundry detergent powders contain enzymes.
- Ammonia – you'll find cloudy ammonia in supermarkets.
- White vinegar.
- Chlorine bleach.
- Glycerine.
- An alcohol-based solvent such as meths.
- A fat/oil solvent – turps, white spirits or kerosene.
- A carpet spot cleaner for carpets or rugs.



## The golden rules

- Act quickly – before the stain sets.
- Check the fabric care label. Wool, silk, synthetics and non-colourfast garments can be damaged by some chemicals such as bleach or meths.
- Take expensive or delicate garments to a drycleaner.
- If in doubt about a treatment, test on an inconspicuous spot first.
- If you don't know what caused the stain, sponge it with neat dishwashing liquid then rinse.
- Use light brushing or dabbing motions. Never rub a stain.
- Rinse with cold water unless otherwise directed. Hot water can set a stain.

Here's how to treat spots and stains on fabrics. In most cases, the item should be rinsed or washed straight after treatment.

**Beer:** Soak in a solution of 3 parts water/1 part white vinegar.

**Beetroot juice:** Rinse straight away in cold water, then apply a paste of a laundry detergent containing enzymes and water.

**Blood:** Soak for several hours in a solution of 1tsp salt/600ml cold water, then rinse and apply a paste of a laundry detergent containing enzymes and water. Don't treat the stain with hot water as this will set it.

**Candle wax:** Scrape off as much as you can, then allow the stain to harden (applying ice cubes or placing the garment in the freezer will speed up the process). Place stain between layers of white paper towels and press with a warm iron, changing the paper as it becomes soiled. Sponge the residue with meths.

**Chewing gum:** Freeze with ice and break off as much as possible. Treat the residue with turps and wash in hot soapy water.

**Chocolate/cocoa:** Scrape off excess chocolate then apply a paste of a laundry detergent containing enzymes and water.

**Coffee/tea:** Soak in warm water with a squirt of dishwashing liquid. If the stain persists, soak a **black coffee** or **tea** stain in a solution of 2 parts water/1 part white vinegar. Try a paste of a laundry detergent containing enzymes and water on a stain from **white coffee** or **tea**.

**Crayon:** Treat the same as candle wax.

**Curry:** A tricky stain – take garments you value to a dry-cleaner. Otherwise, soak the garment in warm water, squeeze out the excess, apply glycerine and leave for an hour. Rinse, then try a paste of a laundry detergent containing enzymes and water.

**Deodorants/antiperspirants:** Sponge or soak in a solution of 1tbsp ammonia/1 cup warm water with a squirt of dishwashing liquid. Treat residual traces with turps.

**Egg:** Apply a paste of a laundry detergent containing enzymes and water. Don't treat the stain with hot water as this will make it harder to remove.

**Fats & oils:** Sprinkle with talcum powder, leave for 30 minutes then scrape off. Lubricate older stains with glycerine, then sponge with dishwashing liquid and warm water. Treat residual stains with turps.

**Fruit juice:** Rinse immediately in cold water. If the stain persists, and the fabric will stand it, spread the item over a bowl and pour boiling water over the stain. Otherwise, sponge or soak the stain in warm water with a squirt of dishwashing liquid. Treat residual stains with meths.

**Glue:** Soak cellulose-based glues in cold water with a squirt of dishwashing liquid. Meths works on PVA. Other glues may only respond to nail polish remover. (*Spot test first.*)

**Grass:** Sponge with meths, dry, and then soak in water with a squirt of dishwashing liquid.

**Hair dye:** Blot with warm (not hot) water then sponge with a solution of 1tbsp ammonia in ½ cup water. (*Spot test first on coloured fabrics.*)

**Hair spray:** Sponge with meths.

**Ink (ballpoint pen):** Sponge with meths, then rinse thoroughly in cold water. Repeat as necessary.

**Ink (liquid & marker):** Remove excess with absorbent paper. Sponge or dip in a solution of equal parts ammonia and water. (*Spot test first on coloured fabrics.*) Rinse in warm water.

**Lipstick/makeup:** Gently rub in glycerine to loosen the stain, then treat with meths.

**Mildew/mould:** Treat white cotton or linen with a mixture of 1tbsp chlorine bleach/1L warm soapy water. On coloured fabrics dilute the bleach even more and be prepared for some fading.

**Milk/cream/ice cream:** Rinse in warm (not hot) water and dishwashing liquid, then apply a paste of a laundry detergent containing enzymes and water and soak. Treat residual fat stains with turps.

**Motor oil:** Scrape away as much as possible and sponge with turps. For washable fabrics rub glycerine into the stain. Rinse under a hot tap, then soak in water with dishwashing liquid.

**Nail polish:** Treat non-synthetic fabrics with nail polish remover. (*Spot test first.*) Treat any residual marks with meths. **Never** treat acetate fabrics with nail polish remover – it can melt them!

**Paint (oil-based):** Scrape off as much as possible and sponge residue with turps. If paint has dried, soften with glycerine first.

**Paint (water-based & latex):** Wash away fresh paint with cold water. Remove residue with meths. Once dry these paints are virtually impossible to remove.

**Perfume:** Apply glycerine, then soak in a solution of equal parts white vinegar and water.

**Perspiration:** Sponge with a solution of 1 part ammonia/5 parts water, then rinse. Follow up by soaking in a solution of 1 part white vinegar/3 parts water.

**Rust:** Dab in a paste of lemon juice and salt and leave for an hour. Rinse and repeat if necessary.

**Scorch marks:** Light marks can often be removed by immediately washing in warm soapy water, rinsing and drying in the sun.

**Shoe polish/cleaners:** Scrape off the excess then apply a solution of equal parts ammonia and water. If the stain is stubborn treat with meths.

**Sunscreen:** Absorb excess with tissues, then sponge with meths.

**Tar/bitumen:** Scrape off as much as possible. Rub in glycerine to soften the stain, leave for 30 minutes, then apply turps or eucalyptus oil.

**Tomato sauce:** Sponge with dishwashing liquid, then rinse. Apply a paste of a laundry detergent containing enzymes and water and soak.

**Urine:** Soak in a solution of 1 part ammonia/5 parts water. On stubborn stains follow with a solution of 1 part white vinegar/3 parts water. Or use a nappy soaker.

**Vomit:** Remove excess, rinse in cold water, then apply a paste of a laundry detergent containing enzymes and water and soak.

**Wine (red):** Flush with lots of cold water, then pour salt on the stain, and let it stand for an hour. Scrape off the salt and rinse thoroughly. But see "Carpet care" if the wine is on the carpet.

## Safe cleaning

- Many stain removal chemicals are poisonous. Store them out of the reach of children.
- When treating a stain with meths, turps, kerosene, white spirits, or nail polish remover stay well away from naked flames or burning cigarettes.
- Keep a door or window open to ventilate the area and avoid breathing the fumes.
- Never use ammonia with products containing chlorine bleach – the fumes given off by the mixture are dangerous.

## Carpet care

- Treat the stain immediately.
- First, remove as much excess as possible. For liquid stains, blot up as much of the liquid as you can. Dab the stain – don't scrub (it can damage the carpet pile and leave matted fibres). Next, dilute the stain with cold water and continue blotting until the stain fades. Don't saturate the carpet – if the backing becomes wet it can create new stains or even grow mould.
- Candle wax, crayon and gum are easier to remove after being frozen with ice.
- Treat the residue with an appropriate carpet spot cleaner. Test the cleaner first on an inconspicuous patch of carpet, to check that it won't affect the colour. To stop the stain from spreading, work from the outside edges in towards the centre.

■ Large or stubborn stains may need professional carpet cleaning. Some stains permanently change the carpet's colour, and are untreatable. These include types of dye (such as hair dye), chlorine bleach, mustard with turmeric, acid or alkaline cleaners, and plant fertilisers. You may need to get the stained section replaced.

**IMPORTANT:** if the stain isn't liquid and looks serious – for example, tracked-in oily footprints – don't touch it until you've called your insurance company. You may find that repairing the damage is covered by your contents policy.

