



Maintenance and Care Guidelines from the Natural Stone Institute and Tar-mak USA

To get the longest life and preserve the beauty of your natural stone, follow these simple tips:

Coasters: Use coasters under all glasses, particularly those containing alcohol or citrus juices.

Trivets: While many stones can withstand heat, the use of trivets or mats is recommended.

Dust Mopping: Dust mop interior floors frequently using a clean non-treated dry dust mop. Sand, dirt and grit are abrasive and can damage natural stone.

Spills: Blot the spill with a paper towel immediately. Don't wipe the area, it will spread the spill. Flush the area with water and mild soap and rinse several times.

Dry the area thoroughly with a soft cloth. Repeat as necessary.

Cleaning:

Clean stone surfaces with a neutral cleaner, stone soap, or a mild liquid detergent and warm water.

Use a clean rag mop on floors and a soft cloth for other surfaces for best results.

Rinse the surface thoroughly after washing with the soap solution and dry with a soft cloth.

Change the rinse water frequently.

In outdoor pool, patio or hot tub areas, flush with clear water and use mild bleach solution to remove algae or moss.

Cleaning Products:

Products containing lemon, vinegar or other acids may dull or etch calcareous stones.

Scouring powders or creams often contain abrasives that may scratch certain stones.

Many commercially available rust removers contain trace levels of hydrofluoric acid (HF). This acid attacks silicates in addition to other minerals. All stones, including granite and quartzite, will be attacked if exposed to HF.

Sealing:

Sealing is a common step taken on some stones as an extra precaution against staining. In fact, the sealing products used in the stone industry are "impregnators" which do not actually seal the stone, but more correctly act as a repellent rather than a sealer. Sealing does not make the stone stain proof, rather it makes the stone more stain resistant.

Stain Identification:

The following sections describe the types of stains you may have to deal with and the appropriate household chemicals to use and how to prepare and apply a poultice to remove the stain.

Oil-based:

(grease, plumbers' putty, tar, cooking oil, milk, cosmetics)

An oil-based stain will darken the stone and normally must be chemically dissolved so the source of the stain can be flushed or rinsed away. Clean gently with a soft, liquid cleanser with household detergent, mineral spirits, or acetone

Organic:

(coffee, tea, wine, fruit, tobacco, paper, food, urine, leaves, bark, bird droppings)

May cause a pinkish-brown stain and may disappear after the source of the stain has been removed. Outdoors, with the sources removed, sun and rain action will generally bleach out the stains. Indoors, clean with 12% hydrogen peroxide (hair bleaching strength) and a few drops of ammonia.

**Metal:**

(iron, rust, copper, bronze)

Iron or rust stains are orange to brown in color and follow the shape of the staining object. Copper and bronze stains appear as green or muddy-brown and result from the action of moisture on nearby or embedded bronze, copper or brass items. Metal stains must be removed with a poultice.

Biological:

(algae, mildew, lichens, moss, fungi)

Clean with diluted cleaning solution. Use a 1/2 cup of any of the following: ammonia, bleach, or hydrogen peroxide and a gallon of water. Reminder: do not mix bleach and ammonia.

Ink:

(magic marker, pen, ink)

On light colored stones, clean with bleach or hydrogen peroxide. On dark colored stones, clean with lacquer thinner or acetone.

Paint:

Small amounts can be removed with lacquer thinner or scraped off carefully with a razor blade. Heavy paint coverage should be removed only with a commercial "heavy liquid" paint stripper available from hardware stores and paint centers. These strippers normally contain caustic soda or lye. Do not use acids or flame tools to strip paint from stone. Repolishing may be necessary.

Etch Marks:

(caused by acids left on the surface of the stone)

Some materials will etch the finish but not leave a stain. Others will both etch and stain. Contact your stone dealer or call a professional stone restorer for refinishing or repolishing etched areas.

Efflorescence:

(a white powder that may appear on the surface of the stone)

It is caused by the deposition of mineral salts carried by water from below the surface of the stone. When the water evaporates, it leaves the powdery substance. If the installation is new, dust mop or vacuum the powder. You may have to do this several times as the stone dries out. Do not use water to remove the powder; it will only temporarily disappear. If the problem persists, contact your installer to help identify and remove the cause of the moisture.

Scratches and Nicks and Faint Water Spots or Rings

Slight surface scratches may be buffed with dry 0000 steel wool. Deeper scratches and nicks in the surface of the stone should be repaired and repolished by a professional.

Making and Using a Poultice

A poultice is a liquid cleaner or chemical mixed with a white absorbent material to form a paste about the consistency of peanut butter. The poultice is spread over the stained area to a thickness of about 1/4 to 1/2 inch with a wood or plastic spatula, covered with plastic and left to work for 24 to 48 hours. The liquid cleaner or chemical will draw out the stain into the absorbent material. Poultice procedures may have to be repeated to thoroughly remove a stain, but some stains may never be completely removed.

Poultice Materials

Poultice materials include kaolin, fuller's earth, whiting, diatomaceous earth, powdered chalk, white molding plaster or talc. Approximately one pound of prepared poultice material will cover one square foot. Do not use whiting or iron-type clays such as fuller's earth with acid chemicals. The reaction will cancel the effect of the poultice. A poultice can also be prepared using white cotton balls, whitepaper towels or gauze pads.