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# Stone Maintenance - Daily Care

## - granite, marble, travertine, quartzite, engineered quartz -

**1. Clean your stone daily with a soft cloth and a neutral, non-abrasive cleaner. (Mild dish soap and warm water works best)**

Household cleaners such as, Windex, Lysol Disinfectant and 409, can be used but may leave a film (just make sure it does not have any abrasive chemicals such as Ammonia). Using these products on occasion is fine. Keep in mind, the harsher the product, the quicker it will break down your sealer and any cleaning products that contain harsh chemicals such as ammonia will eventually dull the polish of your stone. Your safest bet is to use warm water and a sponge!

**2. Avoid products that contain lemon, vinegar, or other acids on any polished surface. They are susceptible to acid etching.**

If any products mentioned above encounter your natural stone, make sure to clean the area with water **right away**. Acid etching will not occur instantaneously on most natural stones. Marble, Travertine, Limestone, and Onyx are more delicate and thus, more susceptible to etching than granite and quartzite although granite and quartzite can also etch in certain areas and if acidic products are not cleaned up in a timely manner there may be faint etch marks that will appear on the surface.

**3. An occasional application of furniture polish can keep fingerprints off dark colored granite and will give the countertops a nice feel.**

Pledge spray polish works great as well as other wood polish sprays, just make sure to check the list of ingredients and make sure that it DOES NOT contain any harsh and/or abrasive chemicals such as ammonia.

CAUTION: If you have a seam in your countertop, it is best to avoid setting hot materials directly on this area. The epoxy in the seam may melt if exposed to extreme heat for an extended period.

# Natural StoneCare

## Sealing

1. Your natural stone surfaces were sealed before installation by your installer. This helps prevent the absorption of any liquid that can stain your tops but is not foolproof. Sealer gives you more time to clean up spills but does not prevent staining altogether.

2. Resealing depends greatly on the type of stone you have and how much use your work surface is subject to. Sealer may need to be reapplied anywhere from 1 - 4 years, or never depending on the type of stone and the frequency of use.

3. A method to test if your stone needs to be sealed is known as The Water Test,
> to perform the water test, just sprinkle some water on a small area of your countertop, if the water absorbs instantly and the area darkens then it needs another coat of sealer. If the water takes a minute or more to absorb then your stone has enough sealer. (Note: your stone sealer allows you more time to wipe up spills, **SEALERS DO NOT PREVENT STAINING ALL TOGETHER**, it is important that any spills be wiped up in a timely manner to prevent it from absorbing into your stone which will cause a stain and possible etching)

4. Sealers can be purchased at your local home improvement store and a single bottle can last a lifetime. It may not be necessary to reseal your entire countertop. Concentrate only on your trouble areas when needed.

## Stains, Lime Build Up, Stuck on food

1. No sealer is perfect. The best way to avoid a stain is to wipe up any spills immediately. Do not store bottles of cooking oil directly on your granite. Do not store rusty pots, pans, or cans on your countertops as the rust can stain the granite. Use coasters under all glasses, particularly those containing alcohol or citrus juices.

2. If your stone darkens when it is wet with water, do not be alarmed. It will return to its original color when the water evaporates. This is an indication that resealing may be necessary. Oils may also darken your stone which can be difficult to remove once absorbed, make sure to use coasters or a towel under any containers that may have oily residue on the bottom and clean up any spills with water in a timely manner.

3. If lime build up occurs around your faucet, do not use Lime products. Gently scraping the lime off with a straight razor is the best solution. Use the flat side of a straight razor blade for removing stuck on tape, residue, dried paint, glue, dried food, etc.

**ENGINEERED QUARTZ DISCLAIMER**

**ENGINEERED QUARTZ IS A VERY DENSE STONE THAT DOES NOT NEED TO BE SEALED. QUARTZ CAN STILL STAIN & ETCH IF SPILLS ARE MISSED AND LEFT TO SIT FOR AN EXTENDED PERIOD. DUE TO ITS DENSITY QUARTZ ACTS AS IF IT IS PERMANENTLY SEALED WHICH DOES NOT MEAN THAT IT CANNOT STAIN, IT MEANS THAT YOU HAVE MORE TIME TO CLEAN UP A SPILL BEFORE IT ABSORBS. TREAT QUARTZ AS IF IT WERE A SEALED NATURAL STONE!**

# Stain Removal Guide

## Types of Stains and First Step Cleaning Actions

**OIL-BASED**
(grease, 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 OR mineral spirits OR acetone.

**ORGANIC**
(coffee, tea, 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, normal sun and rain action will generally bleach out the stains. Indoors, clean with12% 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 such as nails, bolts, screws, cans, flowerpots, metal furniture. 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. (See section on Making & Using a Poultice) Deep-seated, rusty stains are extremely difficult to remove and the stone may be permanently stained.

**BIOLOGICAL**
(algae, mildew, lichens, moss, fungi)
Clean with diluted (1/2 cup in a gallon of water) ammonia OR bleach OR hydrogen peroxide. ***DO NOT MIX BLEACH AND AMMONIA! THIS COMBINATION CREATES A TOXIC AND LETHAL GAS!***

**INK**
(magic marker, pen, ink)
Clean with bleach or hydrogen peroxide (light colored stone only!) or lacquer thinner or acetone (dark stones only!)

**PAINT**
Small amounts can be removed with lacquer thinner or scraped off carefully with a razorblade. 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. ***Paint strippers can etch the surface of the stone; re-polishing may be necessary. Follow the manufacturer's directions for use of these products, taking care to flush the area thoroughly with clean water. Protect yourself with rubber gloves and eye protection, and work in a well-ventilated area.*** Use only wood or plastic scrapers for removing the sludge and curdled paint. Normally, latex and acrylic paints will not cause staining. Oil-based paints, linseed oil, putty, caulks and sealants may cause oily stains. Refer to the section on oil-based stains.

**WATER SPOTS AND RINGS**
(surface accumulation of hard water)
Buff with dry 0000 steel wool.

**FIRE AND SMOKE DAMAGE**
Older stones and smoke or fire-stained fireplaces may require a thorough cleaning to restore their original appearance. Commercially available "smoke removers" may save time and effort.

**ETCH MARKS**
Etch marks are 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. Once the stain has been removed, wet the surface with clear water and sprinkle on marble polishing powder, available from a hardware or online store. Rub the powder onto the stone with a damp cloth or by using a buffing pad with a low-speed power drill. Continue buffing until the etch mark disappears and the marble surface shines. Contact your stone dealer or call a professional stone restorer for refinishing or re-polishing etched areas that you cannot remove.

**EFFLORESCENCE**
Efflorescence is a white powder that may appear on the surface of the stone. It is caused by water carrying mineral salts from below the surface of the stone rising through the stone and evaporating. 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**
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 re-polished by a professional.

## Poultices

**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 **baking soda**, 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.***

## Cleaning Agents or Chemicals to use

**OIL-BASED STAINS**
Poultice with **baking soda** OR one of the powdered poultice materials and **acetone** OR mineral spirits.

**ORGANIC STAINS**
Poultice with one of the powdered poultice materials and 12% hydrogen peroxide solution (hair bleaching strength) OR use acetone instead of the hydrogen peroxide.

**IRON STAINS**
Poultice with diatomaceous earth and a commercially available rust remover. Rust stains are particularly difficult to remove. You may need to call a professional.

**COPPER STAINS**
Poultice with one of the powdered poultice materials and ammonia. These stains are difficult to remove. You may need to call a professional.

**BIOLOGICAL STAINS**
Poultice with diluted ammonia OR bleach OR hydrogen peroxide. **DO NOT MIX AMMONIA AND BLEACH! THIS COMBINATION CREATES A TOXIC AND LETHAL GAS!**

## Applying the Poultice

Prepare the poultice. **If using powder, mix the cleaning agent or chemical to a thick paste the consistency of peanut butter. If using paper, soak in the chemical and let drain. Do not let the liquid drip.**

**Wet** the stained area with water.

**Apply the poultice** to the stained area about1/4 to 1/2 inch thick and extend the poultice beyond the stained area by about one inch. Use a wood or plastic scraper to spread the poultice evenly.

**Cover the poultice with plastic** and tape the edges to seal it.

**Allow the poultice to dry thoroughly**, usually about 24 to 48 hours. The drying process is what pulls the stain out of the stone and into the poultice material. After about 24 hours, remove the plastic and allow the poultice to dry.

**Remove** the poultice from the stain. **Rinse** with water and buff dry with a soft cloth. Use the wood or plastic scraper if necessary. The effected area may need to be resealed with a penetrating stone sealer after a poultice is used.

***Repeat the poultice application if the stain is not removed. It may take up to five applications for difficult stains.***

# ADDITIONAL GUIDE FOR REMOVAL OF OIL BASED STAINS

(oil & water do not mix so a water-based poultice will not be effective – use a solvent-based poultice instead such as acetone or mineral spirits based)

FIRST METHOD

1. Blot the excess oil off your granite using a paper towel. Be extra careful to not allow the excess oil to contact other areas of your granite.
2. Once the surface is cleared of oil, grab another paper towel and fold it a couple of times until it is the same size as the stain.
3. Place the folded paper towel on top of the stain and pour the acetone on it until it is soaking wet.
4. Cover the area using plastic wrap. Make sure to seal the edges of the plastic wrap for a tight fit to prevent the acetone from drying quickly.
5. Leave it overnight.
6. In the morning, remove the tape, the plastic wrap and the paper towel. Dispose of them carefully without letting them touch the granite.

***After you remove the patch, you will notice a dark spot on the patched area. Do not panic because it will disappear after about three hours and your granite will be back to its original appearance.***

SECOND METHOD

1. Blot the excess oil off your granite using a paper towel. Be extra careful to not allow the excess oil to contact other areas of your granite.
2. In a bowl, create a mixture of baking soda and solvent (such as acetone or mineral spirits) to make a paste. An equal part of each ingredient is required.
3. Apply a thin layer over the remaining oil stains using the baking soda paste.
4. Get your extra plastic wrap and cover the areas where you applied the paste. Leave it as is until it dries (could take up to 24 hours).
5. When you can see that it is dry, remove the plastic wrap. Using a plastic scraper, also remove the dried paste.
6. Get a dry cloth and moisten it with water. Wipe with the cloth to remove the paste residue off the countertop.
7. Once the dried baking soda paste is gone, get another cloth, and pour a small amount of natural stone cleaner on it and clean the area.
8. Let the granite air dry.

***Repeat the poultice application if the stain is not removed. It may take up to five applications for difficult stains. The area may need to be resealed after using a poultice.***