

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY EXTENSION

Holiday Stain Removal

Holiday celebrations call for special clothes, table settings, candle light, the finest foods, and beverages. Often the food, beverages, and candle wax accidentally stain the textiles.

If your fabrics and celebration treasures are washable, the following reminders will help you get through the holidays with minimum stain removal frustration.

For best success, treat all stains within 24 hours. Older stains are more difficult to remove.

If your items can only be drycleaned, take them to the cleaners promptly and explain the type of stain. Some items must be drycleaned because they include various components and are not all compatible with laundry processes.

STAIN CLASS	WHAT TO DO IF TEXTILE IS WASHABLE
Protein stains egg nog ice cream chocolate milk milk puddings and pies	1. Soak in <i>cold</i> water to soften and loosen protein. (Hot water cooks the stain into the fibers.) 2. Launder with regular detergent and warm water
Tannin stains alcoholic beverages beer, wine citrus and other juices (lemonade, orange, grape) cola and soft drinks cranberry, blueberry, strawberry, raspberry coffee, tea (If coffee and tea contain cream and sugar, treat as combination stain.)	1. Do not pretreat with bar soap.* 2. Launder with detergent and warm/hot water. 3. If trace remains, soak in all-fabric bleach solution for five minutes. (Or, use all-fabric bleach in wash, if stain is not fresh.) *Caution: Soap sets tannin stains.
Oil stains bacon fat butter mayonnaise salad dressing	1. Spray with aerosol pretreatment spray or rub with liquid detergent, then wash promptly in hot water with detergent. 2. An oil stain that sets more than a day in nylon, or polyester or their blends will be hard to remove.
Dye stains felt tip pen Koolaid mustard	1. Wash with detergent and hot water; bleach, using the type that is safe for the fabric. Follow bleach bottle/package directions. All fabric bleaches usually can be used on colored fabrics. Liquid chlorine bleach in dilute solution is more powerful and effective for whites.

Combination stains

ball point
chocolate
lipstick
pine resin
turkey or other gravy

1. Treat protein portion of stain first.
2. Treat oily portion of stain as for oil stains.
3. Finally bleach as for dye stains.

Hard-to-Remove Combination Stains**Candle wax**

1. Let harden; scrape off solid wax with dull knife.
2. Crack and remove as much residue as possible in dry state.
3. Pretreat with aerosol pretreatment spray.
4. Scrub by hand using hot water and liquid laundry detergent.
5. If color remains, bleach as safe for fabric.
6. Launder. Repeat from 3 as needed.

Note: Many stain removal guides suggest ironing wax stains with absorbent paper towels to transfer and absorb the wax. This forces the part of the stain that doesn't transfer farther into the yarns and fibers; it will leave an oily looking permanent spot.

Chewing gum

1. Apply ice to harden stain.
2. Scrape off excess with a dull knife.
3. Spray with pretreatment aerosol product.
4. Scrub with heavy-duty liquid detergent.
5. Rinse in hot water; repeat from 3, as needed.
6. Launder.

Soot, smoke

1. If excess, shake off outdoors.
2. Launder in washer using heavy-duty detergent, water conditioner, and all fabric bleach.
3. Air dry; inspect for smoke odor.
4. Repeat as necessary.
5. Soot carbon particles get mechanically stuck between fibers; bleaching as a last resort may not help much.

Tips on spot treatment of stains of delicate fabrics

The aim is to confine the stain to as small a spot as possible. To do this you need a supply of white paper towels or clean rags and one of these 3 things: a drycleaning solvent, spot remover, or pretreatment spray. Follow these steps:

1. Pad the working surface with clean rags or towels that can be stained as you work.
2. Turn the stained area or spot on the garment face down over the padded surface.
3. Dampen a small white cloth with solvent.
4. Use the damp cloth to rub the stain from the wrong side. "Feather" the edges of the stain working from the outside edges toward the center to confine the stain to a small area.
5. As the stain transfers into the absorbent material underneath, move it to a different place so it has a clean spot to exit into.
6. Repeat this procedure until all traces of the stain are gone.
7. Launder to remove any ring that might be left by the solvent.

Concentrated stain removers and stain sticks may work the same, as well as heavy-duty liquid detergents, but are more convenient to use because of packaging sizes.

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