

How Do You Maintain Granite Countertops and How to Get Stains Out of Natural Stone? (Hint: Prevention is Key)

Durable, beautiful, and easy to clean, granite is one of the most popular household surfaces out there. But **how do you maintain granite countertops** and keep them looking beautiful in the long term?

How Do You Maintain Granite Countertops?

All surface materials require some amount of regular maintenance. While granite is one of the easiest natural stone surfaces to care for, it can become dull or stained over time around sinks and high traffic work areas. Prevention is key! Making a habit out of the following measures will go a long way in protecting your granite countertops for many years to come:

- Wipe counters daily with a neutral cleaner
- Use cutting boards, cooling racks and trivets
- Clean spills and moisture as soon as possible
- Keep bottles of cleaning fluids like dish detergent off of countertops (on a dish, for example)
- Use coasters for mugs and glasses
- Dry underneath dishes regularly
- Wipe water around faucets off daily to prevent it from calcifying and turning white (using a neutral cleaner once a week can clear away buildup)

Sealing Granite Surfaces

All granites will benefit from being sealed properly, which the installer/fabricator can take care of for you. All light-colored granites must be sealed properly to prevent water and other liquids from being absorbed. With the right daily maintenance, a good sealer can last for up to ten years! Penetrating sealers form a chemical bond with the stone's surface and provide additional protection against water, oil, grease, stains and the general wear and tear of daily use. Applying a sealer often entails simply spraying the product on and wiping off excess. It's always wise to check manufacturer recommendations on how to properly apply a sealer. In the coming weeks, we'll be talking about sealing natural stone in more detail.

Oxidation from sunlight and air can break down sealers over time. However, an even bigger culprit is the use of improper cleaners, which brings us to...

A Note on Cleaning Products

It's important to check cleaning labels to ensure a product is safe for use on stone before applying. A daily stone surface cleaner should not leave behind residue. As such, it is **not** advisable to use dish detergent on countertops, as they often contain fatty acids which can leave a greasy film and dull the surface or leave unsightly streaks.

Beyond being adored for its sublime beauty, natural stone is celebrated for its resilience. When proper maintenance and care guidelines are followed – including cleaning & sealing natural stone regularly – these surfaces offer magnificent durability. Even so, stains can happen as a natural consequence of frequent use. When it comes to **how to get stains out of natural stone**, a strategic approach is essential. In this article, we'll go into detail about how to effectively address different sorts of stains which may appear on natural stone surfaces, both inside & outside the home.

How to Get Stains Out of Natural Stone | Step 1: Identify the Staining Agent

Have you noticed a stained area on your natural stone countertop, vanity top, wall or floor? To successfully remove the blemish, your first step is to identify the type of stain you are dealing with. Ascertaining the culprit is key, as this will determine the most appropriate method to restore your stone surface. Staining agents commonly present in the kitchen, bathroom and other areas where natural stone is used include:

- Organic materials, such as wine, fruit juice, food scraps, tea/coffee and leaves
- Oils, such as cooking oil, cosmetics, grease and oil-based paint
- Ink, such as pen or marker
- Metals, such as copper and iron
- Biological agents, such as mildew and algae
- Hard water

Not sure what stained your natural stone surface? By considering where the stain is located & the activities which are done in that area, you should be able to make an educated guess. Ask yourself: Is the surface indoors or out? Is it in a spot where food preparation or dining occurs? How about an area where cosmetics are applied? Finally, what color/shape is the stain? Asking these questions will help you determine what most likely caused the stain, allowing you to select the most fitting solution for how to get stains out of natural stone.

Step 2: Remove the Stain Using an Appropriate Cleaning Agent or Poultice

Once you've assessed the type of stain present on your natural stone surface, it's time to acquire the right cleaning agent or chemical to remove it. To draw out certain types of stains, you may need to prepare a poultice, or a paste made by combining a liquid cleaner/chemical with a white absorbent material such as talc or diatomaceous earth. Here are the recommended cleaning solutions for various types of stains on natural stone:

- For **organic stains**, combine 12% hydrogen peroxide OR acetone with a powdered poultice material
- **Oil-based stains** can typically be removed using a poultice of baking soda and water
- To remove **ink stains** from light colored stone, use hydrogen peroxide OR bleach; for dark stones, use acetone OR lacquer thinner
- **Rust stains** can sometimes be removed using a poultice of diatomaceous earth and a commercial rust remover, although professional assistance may be needed for these notoriously stubborn stains
- **Copper stains** may be lifted by a poultice of ammonia and a powdered absorbent material; but like rust, they might require professional help
- **Biological stains** are effectively removed with a poultice of diluted ammonia OR hydrogen peroxide OR bleach (Remember: Do NOT mix ammonia and bleach – a toxic gas results from this combination!)
- **Water rings & spots** will typically disappear after spraying with a neutral stone cleaner, then buffing with a soft cloth or non-abrasive scouring pad

Pro Tips for Using a Poultice

If the applicable method for removing the stain in question calls for preparation of a poultice, here are a few important things to know:

- First, here's a more comprehensive list of absorbent materials which can be used to prepare a poultice: powdered chalk, fuller's earth, kaolin, diatomaceous earth, talc & white molding plaster. White gauze pads, cotton balls or paper towels may also be used.
- Whiting clays such as fuller's earth should not be used with acidic chemicals, as mixing the two will create a reaction that renders the poultice ineffective on stone.
- When forming a poultice paste, aim for a consistency similar to peanut butter.
- To apply a poultice, use a plastic or wooden spatula. Spread the poultice over the stained area, to a thickness of about 1/4" to 1/2" above the surface. Then, cover with plastic and leave the poultice on for 24 to 48 hours. The liquid cleaning agent or chemical will work to draw out the stain, absorbing it into the powdered material.
- For deeply set stains, the poultice application process may need to be repeated several times in order to achieve full resolution. If you are having difficulty removing a stain, consult a professional for assistance.
- Do NOT leave bleach on for too long on dark stone surfaces as it might discolor the surface itself.