

ASK THE DRY CLEANING LADY:

# Fashion's Love Affair with distressed jeans

Fashion's love affair with denim began long ago and continues to evolve as the fabric takes on new and appealing forms. For Spring/Summer 2013, denim is back on trend and hotter than ever with hip, distressed looks leading the way. Distressed, worn and torn jeans are in style but there are times when jeans suddenly show "holes" that weren't there before – particularly after cleaning. They tear and the holes become bigger and the next thing you know, they're unwearable. The manufacturers go to great extent to manufacture the jeans and other wearing apparel in order to appear as though they are worn and distressed, but that appearance can become even more so after being washed and worn. Sometimes, denim fabrics, such as jeans, shirts, skirts, dresses, jackets, etc., show mysterious rips, holes and fraying in areas that have been faded in manufacturing to impart the faded, aged and worn look. Chemical and/or mechanical over processing during the distressing process can cause local loss of tensile strength.

**Q: What does it look like?**

**A:** The damage appears only in the artificially discolored or faded places designed to impart the worn or vintage look to the garment. Because the fabric has already been chemically degraded during the aging procedure, thin areas, small holes, cuts, rips or tears can happen while the garment is still relatively new. This damage can originate from normal abrasion, bending and stress in use, but may not reveal itself until after the mechanical action of cleaning causes the weakened distressed areas to come apart.

**Q: What caused it?**

**A:** Color distressed fabrics can be subjected to sanding, scraping, grinding or other mechanical means to get the desired worn look. These processes are usually combined with chemical procedures, such as, stone washing, vintage or acid washing, as well as bleaching (mainly with potassium permanganate). Any combination of these distressing processes if not completed carefully can cause early fabric degradation, creating unwanted fraying, holes or tears. The agitation of later cleaning only aggravates the problem, but is not the original cause.

**Q: Can it be prevented?**

**A:** This style denim is meant to appear discolored, dirty, stained and faded from wear and age even though they are actually brand new. They are not supposed to have holes or rips. The more distressed style denim garments are sold as "destroyed" denim and they do have designed rips and fraying. The properties of the chemicals applied during the manufacture and the mechanical distressing methods must only age "discolor" the garment in the desired pattern and not deteriorate the fabric before the end of the garments expected life cycle. Neither the garment owner, nor the cleaner has any means to predict or prevent such damage during normal wear and care or cleaning. Only the garment manufacturer can prevent such damage by using proper distressing methods..

**Q: Who is responsible?**

**A:** The manufacturer is responsible for the use of compatible chemicals, materials and vintage style distressing methods that can withstand expected conditions of normal wear for a reasonable period of time. The fabric should also be able to repeatedly withstand accepted cleaning processes without early damage. The fabric manufacturer must achieve a delicate balance to complete color aging without fabric degradation. When color distressed fabrics fray or rip when they are still relatively new, then the manufacturer must be held responsible. Once the fabric begins to weaken and degrade and/or actually tear, there is no method of satisfactory repair.

Toudanines Cleaners takes great care in the handling and cleaning of all garments and considers it a privilege to service your drycleaning needs.

*Arlene Converse is President of Toudanines Cleaners in Boerne, San Antonio and Schertz, Texas. They currently own and operate 3 locations in Boerne and throughout the San Antonio area. In 19 years they have owned and operated 17 stores in 11 cities throughout the state of Texas. For more information visit our website at [www.ToudaninesCleaners.com](http://www.ToudaninesCleaners.com), Facebook and Twitter. If you have a question for The Dry Cleaning Lady, please submit it to [info@ToudaninesCleaners.com](mailto:info@ToudaninesCleaners.com).*

