



by Arlene Converse



## Ask the Dry Cleaning Lady:

# STAINS, STAINS AND MORE STAINS...

**T**here is no single issue in any dry cleaners that takes more time and focus than that of stains, stains, and more stains!!! There are many different types of stains that dry cleaners encounter. There are the stains that customers know are there and they tell us exactly what they are, how they got there and what, if anything they did to remove it. There are the stains that the customer treats at home, that can greatly impact the chances of removal and create even further damage to the garment. But the worse are the stains that the customers fail to tell us about that appear after the garments have been either wet cleaned or dry cleaned, after which many times, it's too late.

Stains are one of the main reasons people seek the help of their drycleaner. With our special solvents and stain removal agents, equipment and training, drycleaners can remove some of the most disastrous-looking stains with relative ease, however, not all stains can be removed, despite our best efforts. Successful stain removal depends largely on the nature of the stain, the type of fabric, the colorfastness of the dye, and how long the stain has been in the garment and what, if any, efforts were taken by the customer prior to bringing in the garment. It's important to know that some fabrics and dyes are not made to withstand the use of cleaning or stain removal agents. In order to guide you through the world of STAINS, a little information is always helpful ... to the customer as well as the drycleaner!

### "INVISIBLE STAINS"

Many stains that are caused by food, oily substances or beverages that may become invisible when they dry. But later on, with the exposure to heat or the passage of time, a yellow or brownish stain will appear. This is caused by the oxidation or the caramelization of the sugar in the staining substance. It is the same process that makes a peeled apple turn brown after exposure to air. You can help us do a better job by pointing out such stains when you bring the garment in to be cleaned. We often treat these stains prior to cleaning, since the heat of drying or finishing may set the stain and possibly even cause color loss or further damage.

When the oily substance is exposed to heat or is allowed to age in a garment for an extended time, it also oxidizes. This type of stain can be distinguished by the irregular "cross pattern" the oil makes when it follows the fabric fibers. Oily substances are successfully removed in drycleaning unless they are left to oxidize or have been pretreated at home. Once they become yellow or brown, they become much more difficult, if not impossible to remove.

### PERSPIRATION STAINS

Perspiration can also cause problem stains, particularly on silk and wool garments. Perspiration left in a silk garment can eventually cause deterioration of the silk fibers, causing the fibers to tear.

Repeated exposure of a garment to perspiration and body oils can create a permanent yellow discoloration, color loss and an objectionable odor. In addition, perspiration can react

with the dye or sizing in the fabric, making it even more difficult to remove the stain. Clothing frequently worn or heavily stained also requires frequent cleaning, especially clothes heavily soiled with perspiration. Often garments that are worn repeatedly without cleaning cause the stains to set permanently.

### COLOR LOSS

There are many substances and environmental issues customers may encounter in the course of a day that can cause color loss. In many instances, the discoloration does not appear until the item is cleaned.

### STAINS THAT CAN CAUSE COLOR LOSS:

**Alcohol:** Perfume, colognes, skin fresheners, aftershave, hair spray, lotions, medicines, and alcoholic beverages can cause a stain which appears as a white or cream center with a dark ring around the edges.

**Bleach:** Home bleaches, hair care products, disinfectants, acne preparations, skin lotions, medicines, and cleaning products can cause a change or loss of color depending on the types of dyes used in the fabric. For example, blue dye can turn orange or white.

**Acids:** Perspiration, deodorants, hair preparations, and fruit juices appear as an orange or red discoloration in areas contacted by an acid. The color change usually appears after a period of time or with exposure to heat in cleaning or pressing.

**Alkaline:** Cleaning products, toothpaste, soap, detergents, shampoo, skin preparations, and in some cases, perspiration, may appear as a yellow, green or cream color on many fabrics. This type of color change may not appear until the stained area has aged or the item is exposed

to heat in a cleaning process.

**Salt:** Medicines, perspiration, beverages and foodstuffs, gutter splash and salty water from the ocean or snow removal slush can build in a change in color on wool fabrics.

**Hair Preparations:** Permanent wave or cold wave solution, or other hair care products can result in a change in color and is easily recognized by the location in the neckline, shoulder or back of a garment.

**WHAT YOU SHOULD DO:**

1. Never put a garment away with spills or stains on it. The warmth of a closet and exposure to natural or artificial light and to the atmosphere can contribute to setting a stain.


2. Bring in a stained garment as soon as possible, preferably within a few days, to prevent the stains from setting.

3. Do not iron the stained or soiled garment, this will set stains and drive the soil deeper into the fabric. Always have soiled clothes cleaned before ironing.

4. Do not attempt home removal with either water or a cleaning fluid without testing first for colorfastness. Wet an unexposed area, such as an inside seam, and blot with a paper towel to make sure the color is fast.

5. Never rub a stain, especially when attempting to remove a stain from silk. Blot the stained area. This will help remove the staining substance without spreading the stain and will avoid damaging the fabric and color.

6. Inform your drycleaner of the location of specific stains and any procedures you have used to remove them, even if the stains are no longer visible.

Toudanines Cleaners considers it a privilege to be of service to you in satisfying your drycleaning needs. Every effort is made to remove stains to garments however, if it appears that the garment can become damaged in the attempt or creates color loss; we will suspend our efforts and discuss the potential for damage prior to proceeding. Many times, depending on the garment and the type of stain, a consent form is requested which informs you of the risks involved. If you know there is a stain or that the garment has been exposed to spillage or environmental issues, please let us know. 

*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).*



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