

Snuggle Weather is Right Around the Corner!

by Arlene Converse

This is the best time of the year ... always! It's nature's remedy for a little attitude adjustment. Have you noticed that when you wake up, open the door and when the temperatures have dropped 20 digits, immediately two things come to mind! The first one is merely "ahhhh" and then the next immediate thought is "OMG, I need to get out my sweaters and coats!" When the cool weather settles in, we all enjoy the relief from all those months of 3 digit heat! But now it's time to pull out the sweaters, coats and other winter apparel and get ready to enjoy a different wardrobe for a few months. I don't know about you, but I love winter clothes. Out with the shorts, polo's and short sleeve shirts. I love winter fashion. Grant it they are bulky, but they look good and many times are more fashionable than summer apparel. If you had to wear these bulky coats every single day for a year, maybe it would be different. But here in Texas, it's a wonderful time to change wardrobes and take in the fresh air. So let's talk sweaters and knits and do all we can to look our best for the winter months!

Q: Should I hang or fold sweaters and other knits?

A: It's important to make the right choice between hanging and folding sweaters and knits. Sturdy tight knits or weaves are generally safe to be hung on a hanger and require very little maintenance when it's time to wear them. Most sweaters and knits, especially the looser and thinner ones, should be folded. Use of acid free tissue is best in order to soften the folds as well as preventing distorting the shape of the garment. If the sweater is heavy it is always best to fold the sweater or sweater dress, either over a hanger or stored laying down either on a shelf or in a dresser drawer. This prevents the garment from stretching out. Many times when customers have hung the knit garments, they stretch out and they request that we try to shrink it back to it's original size. Rarely does that happen. You can't control shrinkage and target only a specific area any more than you can control stretching out a garment and control it to only a specific area. It's best to take precautions during winter and during the storage months, to fold them and lay them flat as a precaution.

Q: Can I leave the clothes in their plastic bags?

A: Remove all garments from all plastic bags. The plastic bags that you receive your clothes in from the dry cleaners are intended for short term protection only. They are not intended for long term storage of garments. These bags trap heat and humidity, contributing to the oxidation of stains and general discoloration on fabrics and prevent the fabric from breathing. If you want to properly protect your garments there are bags designed specifically for long term storage of garments. Make sure where you are hanging and/or storing your sweaters or other winter apparel is dry. Moisture can result in mildew. You want your garments to breathe. Plastic can block the flow of air. Take care of your wearing apparel and it will be there when you are ready to wear it.

Q: What is knit blocking?

A: Knit blocking is the process of changing the size and/or shape of a knit item or even returning it to its original dimensions through a process of redistributing the knit weave. The blocking process is accomplished by passing steam through the knit material, shifting and distributing the material to the desired position or shape and then cooling the knit to lock the shape into place. Blocked knits typically hold their dimension throughout the cleaning process.

Q: How do you clean winter accessories, such as gloves, hats, and scarves?

A: Remember last spring when you bagged your hats, gloves, and scarves and put them in the back of your closet? Well, now it's time to get them out and ready for another winter. If inspection shows they were put away in a soiled condition, now is the time to clean them.

If care labels are present, follow instructions carefully. Many synthetics, as well as cottons and wools, are hand or machine washable. If tumble drying is recommended, use a low temperature setting.

Wool, fur, and leather accessories will require our assistance. These materials require special cleaning and finishing procedures. Any known stains should be pointed out when you leave them with us. Most items will clean beautifully, but accessories, particularly gloves, are exposed to many staining substances that cannot be removed.

Q: The care label on a sweater indicates it is hand washable. Can I wash it in a machine on a delicate cycle?

A: There is some risk involved in using any care process not recommended by the manufacturer. Hand washing involves manual removal of soils with water, detergent, and a gentle squeezing action. A care label that calls for machine washing, in a delicate or gentle cycle, indicates the garment can be cleaned with water, detergent or soap, slow agitation, and reduced time in a washing machine. Hand washing is a restrictive care process that minimizes the amount of abrasion a garment receives in cleaning. If handwashable garments are machine washed in a gentle cycle, agitation may be further minimized by putting the item in a net bag. Often it's the mechanical action associated with a machine that can create the most damage to a garment, such as shrinkage. Beware – even this procedure is in violation of the care label instruction, and places responsibility for damages on the launderer rather than the manufacturer. It's always best to follow the recommended care instructions suggested by the manufacturer. Then if the cleaning process fails, it's the responsibility of the manufacturer.

Now that you have some idea how to care for some of your winter wearing apparel, it's time get outside and enjoy the cool, crisp weather. Maybe skiing is on your agenda or lighting up your fireplace and enjoying TV with a beverage of your choice. Either way, winter and the cooler weather is nature's gift to all of us! It's the change of clothes and the change in attitude. And then we have the holidays right in the middle. Until then everyone, stay warm and enjoy the winter months that are within arms reach. It's snuggle weather!!!

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, Facebook and Twitter. If you have a question for The Dry Cleaning Lady, please submit it to info@ToudaninesCleaners.com.

