

Countertops of Natural stone - Maintenance

High-quality natural stone countertops are easy to maintain and will stay beautiful for generations. The stone surface itself is durable and does not require any foreign coatings or costly treatments. Natural stone should be maintained as simply as possible - soft soap, and neutral all-purpose cleaner are usually sufficient.

When properly cared for, the stone only grows more beautiful with the patina that age and use bring. Simple maintenance saves both time and cost while keeping the environmental impact low. Some stones may be impregnated - check with your stone supplier!

The following advice applies to untreated stone.

Thermal shock

Natural stone generally tolerates high temperatures. However, rapid, localized heating can cause the stone to crack. Never place hot pots, pans, baking stones, or similar items directly on the stone!

Regular cleaning

Granite and Slate

Wipe with a damp cloth, using dishwashing liquid if necessary. For stains, see *Stain Removal*. Note: On granite surfaces, it is better to use a neutral all-purpose cleaner (not soap). Products that build up a film should never be used.

Marble/Limestone

Wipe with a damp cloth, using a soft soap solution if necessary. Regular use of a soft soap solution protects the stone and enhances its sheen. The soap should be natural and free of additives. Polished marble and limestone surfaces have low absorbency; therefore, only a small amount of soap solution should be used. An oversaturated surface can become streaky and dull. Clean such surfaces with water and a neutral all-purpose cleaner.

Restoring an etched surface

A honed marble or limestone surface that has been etched by acidic substances - such as fruit juice, wine, vinegar, or carbonic acid - can be difficult to restore. The most reliable method is to regrind the entire surface mechanically. In some cases, manual improvement can be made by sanding the surface with fine wet sandpaper or a block with diamond grit. Then, apply finely divided beeswax dissolved in white spirit to restore the surface sheen, or use turpentine mixed with paraffin oil and work it in with a soft cloth. Pre-mixed products labelled "stone polish" are also available on the market. Always test any product first on a small, inconspicuous area!

Stain removal

Stone sensitivity to stains varies. The most important factors are:

- The type of stone (granite, slate = silicate stone; marble, limestone = carbonate stone).
- The density and impregnation status.
- Colour, texture, surface finish, and overall condition.

Check with your supplier! Stain removal must always be adapted to the specific situation.

General Principle:

Stains should be removed quickly to prevent them from spreading into the stone. If a stain penetrates deeply, it can be very difficult or impossible to remove. Caution is also necessary, to avoid worsening the stain or damaging the stone. Always try simple methods before using chemicals. The basic principle is the *paste method*, where a solvent is combined with an absorbent material (see yellow fact box).

First step: Try to absorb the stain with paper towels or another absorbent material. Then treat with a damp cloth and water. Next, use a solution of water and dishwashing liquid or neutral all-purpose cleaner. Always work from the outside toward the centre of the stain to prevent spreading. If a solvent is used, rinse thoroughly with water and neutral all-purpose cleaner afterward.

Grease/Oil:

Remove grease or oil stains as soon as possible to prevent penetration. Blot dry with paper and wash with a solvent, then absorb with paper or another absorbent. Suitable solvents include white spirit, thinner/cellulose thinner, acetone, or unleaded petrol (95 octane). For deeper stains, use the paste method. Rinse with a neutral all-purpose cleaner.

Glue:

Since glue types vary, contact the supplier for advice. Residues can be cleaned with thinner or, carefully, with oil-free acetone.

Marker pens:

Use denatured alcohol on a cloth. Thinner or oil-free acetone can also be tried carefully. If the stain has penetrated, use the paste method. Then clean with a neutral all-purpose cleaner.

Oil/Enamel paint:

Use thinner or turpentine with absorbent paper, followed by the paste method if needed. Rinse with an ammonia-water solution if required.

Latex paint (Plastic paint):

Such stains are very difficult to remove once hardened. Wipe off before dry, by using water. Hardened stains can be scraped off with a razor blade. If needed, follow with a warm caustic soda solution and rinse thoroughly.

Wax (Stearin):

Remove as much as possible mechanically by gently scraping with a knife or similar tool. Alternatively, use freeze spray. Then clean with unleaded petrol (95 octane), possibly as a paste. Wash with neutral all-purpose cleaner afterwards.

Tea:

Granite/Slate

Tea stains are difficult to remove. Try first with dishwashing liquid or neutral all-purpose cleaner. Remaining marks can be bleached with a chlorine-based cleaner.

Marble/Limestone

Tea can cause discoloration, especially on light stones if not wiped immediately. Try dishwashing liquid or neutral all-purpose cleaner. If discoloration remains, bleach with chlorine-based cleaner - but note that this may etch or bleach the stone. Rinse thoroughly afterwards.

Chewing Gum:

Scrape off or use freeze spray.

The Paste method

This method involves mixing the chosen solvent with an absorbent powder, such as chalk, bentonite clay, or potato starch, to form a paste. Apply the paste to the stain, which may first be moistened with the solvent. Leave the paste on until it has dried, then brush it off and wash the surface with water. Always test first on a small area. Repeat the treatment if necessary.

Always follow the safety instructions for the products used!

Consumer Information, February 2018

Swedish Stone Industries Federation "Sveriges Stenindustriförbund"

www.sten.se

