

NATURAL STONE COUNTERTOP CARE AND MAINTENANCE

ROUTINE CARE

Natural stone countertops and floors should be cleaned with neutral cleaners specifically designed for stone. These cleaners are concentrated pH neutral cleaners that will not affect existing sealers or other types of coatings. Stone cleaners should never contain acid or bleach. Acids, even a light solution of vinegar and water, will etch and eventually damage many varieties of natural stone. A solution of the pH neutral cleaner and water mixed to manufacturer instructions should be applied to the stone surface with a sponge or spray bottle. Allow solution to sit per manufacturer recommended specified amount of time to ensure penetration of the stone. Agitate with a sponge, or soft bristle brush. Remove dirty solution with clean sponge and buff dry. Some textured stones may require a different cleaning method or additional procedures not specified here.

HEAVY-DUTY STONE CLEANING

If stone needs a deep clean, you will need to use a heavy-duty stone cleaner and degreaser to effectively remove dirt, grease, grime, waxes, etc. These cleaning products are concentrated and designed to deep clean the stone without damaging it. Apply the solution per manufacturer instructions to the stone surface with a sponge. Allow to stand for manufacturer-specified amount of time.

Agitate with a sponge or soft bristle brush. Remove dirty solution with a clean sponge and buff dry. Be sure to change out the cleaning solution every 100 square feet to avoid reintroducing dirty water during the cleaning process. Rinse thoroughly with clean water when finished. Make sure to always limit the time liquids sit on any type of natural stone and dry the surface thoroughly.

STAIN REMOVAL

A stone specific poultice can be used to remove stains and grout haze from stone. Poultice is a fine, non-acidic, absorptive clay cleaning powder that removes stains and light cementitious grout haze from polished and unpolished natural stone. Stone poultice efficacy depends on the nature of the stain and how long the stain has been in the stone. Base the selection of the type of poultice on the nature of the stain. If the stain is old or has penetrated the stone deeply, a poultice may not be enough to remove it. Spills should always be cleaned up as soon as possible. Light colored marble and nearly all limestone are subject to staining. Spills on such materials should be cleaned up immediately to prevent staining.

CAUTION: Poultice may dull the shine of the polished stone. If this occurs you will need to use a stone polish to restore the natural shine.

RESTORATION

If your natural stone has been damaged or is worn, we recommend that you contact a professional stone restoration company.

SEALING

Sealing is strongly recommended for all stone, especially newly installed marble, granite, and limestone to provide maximum stain protection. Be careful to select a high quality sealer to protect your natural stone. Newly installed natural stone countertops are often sealed at the time of installation by the fabricator. Please check with your fabricator regarding their standard sealing regimen. Sealing every couple of years (see manufacturer's directions) will ensure your stone continues to look its best.

TYPES OF SEALING PRODUCTS

There are two categories of sealing products: penetrating/impregnating and stone enhancer.

Penetrating/impregnating stone sealers are a no-sheen, natural look sealer that can be water-based or solvent-based, and are good for interior and exterior applications. Most quality sealers of this type are rated to protect the stone for several years. A premium natural look penetrating/impregnating sealer is the standard choice on polished or honed natural stone countertops.

Stone enhancer sealers are also a no-sheen, penetrating/impregnating sealer that is formulated to darken, enrich, and highlight the natural color and beauty of stone products. They will rejuvenate and improve the appearance of worn and weathered stone. However, they will also darken the color of seams and joints. They are, generally, suitable for interior and exterior use, and rated to protect the stone for several years.

Always reference manufacturers' literature for specific information on the duration of the sealer's protection and make sure that the sealer is applied in strict accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.

ACID SENSITIVITY

The use of natural stones in environments where acid exposure is likely requires a proper stone selection to avoid etching. Most notably, the calcium carbonate and calcite based stones (marble and limestone primarily) will react to relatively mild acids, such as lemon juice, vinegar, and sliced tomatoes. The result is not a stain, which could be removed, but an etching of the stone surface, which cannot be removed without refinishing the stone. In polished finish stones, a mild acid attack will usually manifest itself as a "dull" spot within the surrounding glossy surface.

LOT SPECIFIC ISSUES

Stone tile and countertops are products of nature and are inherently subject to the variability of any product harvested from nature. Select adequate quantities of a product in the beginning of a project as it can be very difficult to buy stone at a later date that matches an initial purchase. We recommend customers purchase a 10% overage.

TRANSLUCENCE

Translucence may occur in some white or very lightly colored marbles and onyxes that have a crystal structure that will transmit light to varying degrees depending upon stone thickness and finish. Translucence can be an aesthetically intriguing, decorative attribute and is not considered a defect.

MIXING TYPES OF MATERIALS

Designs calling for a mixture of stones with different physical properties, while aesthetically interesting, can give rise to problems of wear and maintenance, especially in outdoor applications. Re-polishing will pose problems as well. The customer should be aware that mixing types of stones means there will be different application limitations, abrasion resistance levels, and different densities of stones that must be considered in the long term maintenance of the stone and its wearability.