

How to look after your fabric.

“For optimum care and the ultimate appearance retention, think about employing a professional cleaning service to give your furniture (and potentially your carpet too) a deep clean on a periodic basis.

And think carefully about color choice for the end use area, as darker colors or mixture colors can hide a multitude of sins while lighter shades may well dirty out and show surface staining”.

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Fabric care

Contract fabrics don't look after themselves, even those with additional stain repellent treatment, and without proper care and attention they can look old and dirty well before their time. In extreme cases they can even wear through.

Fabric care in the workplace and contract interiors isn't rocket science and there are obvious parallels to how you look after upholstery fabrics in the home. Following a few simple rules can add years to the wear life and appearance of what should be the most visually appealing element of furniture.

Vacuum regularly

We don't think twice about vacuuming carpets, or doing the same with sofas or car upholstery. It removes dust and grit which can act as a sandpaper like abradant and break down fibres in the fabric structure.

Get to spills and stains quickly

Like at home try and get a piece of kitchen roll or a damp cloth and mop up the spill before it has time to soak in and dry. Once excess liquid has been removed, the fabric can be cleaned using cleaning solution such as upholstery shampoo, detergent or handwash available from your local supermarket. The longer stains and spills remain on the fabric, the harder they are to remove.

Stain repellent treatment

This gives added protection in heavy soiling areas such as canteens and student areas, **but does not make a fabric indestructible - liquid spills aren't going to jump back into the bottle and food stains don't levitate back on to the plate.** In the event of spillage it simply gives the user added time to implement the same care regime as would be applied to non-treated fabric. If you do not actively remove the spillage it will remain on the furniture.

Wool & wool blend upholstery

Wool is an inherently complex smart fiber which naturally retains its shape and appearance over time. Its overlapping outer surface scales – called cuticles – act like a micro shield which repels dust and dirt and provides natural stain resistance as spillages penetrate the fibre surface only very slowly. Wool has natural crimp and stretch which allows virtually limitless compression and recovery, while synthetics are flattened and deadened through time and use.

Cleaning recommendation – vacuum, shampoo & dry clean

In addition to regular vacuuming, wool can also be cleaned using branded upholstery shampoo such as Vanish or Stardrops. For a deeper clean it's best that wool be dry cleaned only, as over-wetting can cause potential shrinkage and appearance change. Dry cleaning involves the use of organic solvents and little or no water to remove dirt, stains and other soiling agents from fabric. Never apply bleach, ammonia, alkali or strong acids to wool upholstery.

Synthetic upholstery

Synthetics include polyester, polypropylene, and nylon as well as Camira own brands such as Xtreme FR and Perfentex. The main difference compared to wool is that they behave like plastic in that the fibers are all non-absorbent to liquid and moisture. This means that liquid spills and stains remain on the surface of the fiber rather than penetrating deeper within. Non-absorbent synthetics will not prevent liquid passing through the fabric to the foam. **They do need more regular cleaning** than wool, as their static charge attracts dust and dirt which, if not removed, can cause an unsightly build up of dirt on the surface of the fabric.

Cleaning recommendation – vacuum & wipe clean/shampoo

Vacuuming is the best regular maintenance practice followed by speed of action to remove spills and stains rapidly as soon as they occur. As synthetics are inert polymers they can all be wiped down with a water soaked damp cloth without fear of damaging the fiber or removing the color. Stubborn stains can be removed with more vigorous repeated rubbing or use of upholstery shampoo.

Machine washing – polyester and Xtreme FR can be machine washed at 40°C - 60°C, although obviously the fabrics will need to be in the form of removable covers.

Bleach cleaning - polypropylene, Perfentex and Intervene can be bleach cleaned using up to a 10% bleach chlorine solution (1 part bleach to 10 parts water).

Dry cleaning - polyester and Xtreme FR respond well to dry cleaning which will remove any surface grime or staining.

NB: Due to the high temperatures involved under no circumstances should polypropylene or Perfentex be machine washed or dry cleaned. Similarly the Intervene backcoating could also be adversely affected.

Stain repellent treatments

Stain repellent treatments enhance the stain resistant properties of both wool and synthetic fabrics and must be specified at the order stage (minimum quantities apply). They work by forming an invisible protective shield around each individual fiber in the fabric structure to provide extra protection against oil and water based spills. They're particularly recommended in high risk areas such as canteens, pubs and restaurants, care homes, student areas, etc. They're permanent treatments, but become less effective over time.

Warning: don't be lulled into a false sense of security by using stain repellent treatments and think that fabrics will now look after themselves. They still need vacuuming and maintaining as per the general cleaning recommendations above. By allowing liquid spills to bead up on the fabric surface they simply provide extra time to get a cloth or kitchen towel to clean them up. If left unattended and allowed to dry then a stain will form.

Stain removal guide

Act quickly to soak up as much of the fresh stain as possible by dabbing using kitchen roll, a cloth or towel. For dried in stains, vacuum then rub gently with a clean white damp cloth. Next use a branded upholstery cleaner, such as Vanish or Stain Devil, and follow the instructions on the container.

Be careful when using organic solvents such as nail varnish remover, surgical spirit or turpentine, as they can dissolve upholstery foams and plastics. Again, always try them on an unseen area first. Specific removal guidelines for some of the main stain hazards in the workplace and other contract areas are given below:



Biro & felt tip pen

Clean with surgical spirit or nail varnish remover, then wash using washing up liquid or handwash diluted in lukewarm water.



Chewing gum

Apply ice cubes in a plastic bag to freeze the gum, then crack it into loose pieces and remove. If unsuccessful, try using nail varnish remover followed by washing up liquid or handwash diluted in lukewarm water.



Drinks & foodstuffs

Use washing up liquid or handwash diluted in lukewarm water applied on a clean white cloth. If unsuccessful, try a branded upholstery cleaner such as Vanish or Stain Devil.



Lipstick & nail varnish

Clean with surgical spirit or nail varnish remover, then wash using washing up liquid or handwash diluted in lukewarm water.