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Care and Maintenance of Your New Stone Counter-tops

Countertops and Vanities

Use a neutral, pH-balanced cleaner, specially formulated for stone, on a regular basis to remove residues from cooking oils and everyday food spills, as well as hairspray or other cosmetics. Be careful with common foods and drinks contain acids that may etch or dull the stone surface. Also, some common toiletries (i.e., perfume, toothpaste, mouthwash) contain acids and other ingredients that may damage the stone surface or degrade the sealer.

Floor Surfaces

Dust mop interior floors frequently using a clean, non-treated, dry dust mop. Sand, dirt and grit do the most damage to natural stone surfaces due to their abrasiveness. Mats or area rugs inside and outside an entrance will help to minimize the potential damage from these particles. In addition, be careful when using a vacuum cleaner as the metal or plastic attachments or wheels may scratch the surface. Damp mop the stone floor with a diluted solution of a neutral cleaner designed for stone. Keep off floor until completely dry, as wet stone floors may be slippery.

Bath and Other Wet Areas

Periodic use of a neutral stone cleaner will remove any soap scum or hard water deposits that may have formed. In the bath, or other wet areas, using a squeegee after each use can minimize soap scum and hard water deposit buildup.

What to Do When a Spill Occurs?

No matter how careful you are, spills are going to happen. A quick response and the right solutions can keep spills from damaging your stone or degrading the sealer.

Etch Marks

Highly acidic substances such as orange juice, coffee, vinegar, wine, tomato products, mustard and many soft drinks will "etch" most marble, limestone and travertine. Sealing allows you time to wipe up a spill, but it cannot stop the chemical reaction that may leave a dull mark.

General cleaners not specifically designed for natural stone are not recommended. These may etch away the polish, discolor the surface, scratch the stone or degrade the sealer. Professional refinishing is the best way to permanently remove etches marks, and restore your natural stone's even finish.

Food Spills

Scoop up the food with a plastic spoon. Blot with dry, white cloth. Spray the area with a neutral stone cleaner and wipe off excess with a clean cloth.

Liquid Spills

Blot away the excess with a clean, dry, white cloth while turning the cloth frequently. Spray the area with a neutral stone cleaner and wipe off excess with a clean cloth.

Mud

Let the mud stain dry completely. Remove dried mud with a soft plastic or nylon brush. Spray affected area with a neutral stone cleaner. Wipe dry with a clean cloth. If the stain remains, contact a professional cleaner.

Oily Stains

If you identify the stain as having an oil base (from foods like salad, cooking oils, butter or some cosmetics) you may be able to remove the stain using a poultice. A poultice will wick up the stain from deep within the stone.



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Making and Using a Poultice

A poultice is a liquid cleaner or chemical mixed with a white absorbent material to form a paste about the consistency of peanut butter. The poultice is spread over the stained area to a thickness of about 1/4 to 1/2 inch with a wood or plastic spatula, covered with plastic and left to work for 24 to 48 hours. The liquid cleaner or chemical will draw out the stain into the absorbent material. Poultice procedures may have to be repeated to thoroughly remove a stain, but some stains may never be completely removed.

Poultice Materials

Poultice materials include kaolin, fuller's earth, whiting, diatomaceous earth, powdered chalk, white molding plaster or talc. Approximately one pound of prepared poultice material will cover one square foot. Do not use whiting or iron-type clays such as fuller's earth with acid chemicals. The reaction will cancel the effect of the poultice. A poultice can also be prepared using white cotton balls, whitepaper towels or gauze pads.

Cleaning Agents or Chemicals

OIL-BASED STAINS

Poultice with baking soda and water OR one of the powdered poultice materials and mineral spirits.

ORGANIC STAINS

Poultice with one of the powdered poultice materials and 12% hydrogen peroxide solution (hair bleaching strength) OR use acetone instead of the hydrogen peroxide.

Applying the Poultice

Prepare the poultice. If using powder, mix the cleaning agent or chemical to a thick paste the consistency of peanut butter. If using paper, soak in the chemical and let drain. Don't let the liquid drip.

Wet the stained area with distilled water.

Apply the poultice to the stained area about 1/4 to 1/2 inch thick and extend the poultice beyond the stained area by about one inch. Use a wood or plastic scraper to spread the poultice evenly.

Cover the poultice with plastic and tape the edges to seal it.

Allow the poultice to dry thoroughly, usually about 24 to 48 hours. The drying process is what pulls the stain out of the stone and into the poultice material. After about 24 hours, remove the plastic and allow the poultice to dry.

Remove the poultice from the stain. Rinse with distilled water and buff dry with a soft cloth. Use the wood or plastic scraper if necessary.

Repeat the poultice application if the stain is not removed. It may take up to five applications for difficult stains.

If the surface is etched by the chemical, apply polishing powder and buff with burlap or felt buffing pad to restore the surface.