

Clean Towels, Linens, and Apparel

When cleaning towels, linens, or apparel, your choice of cleanser makes a difference. Shifting from products made of petrochemicals to natural products may be easier than you think.

Why we care

- Most detergents contain unlisted ingredients. Phosphates promote growth of algae. Fragrances may be toxic and are common allergens. Optical brighteners and fabric softeners remain in clothes after washing where they can be absorbed by the skin, and they can be toxic to marine life.
- Commercial spot removers may contain toxic chemicals.
- If towels, linens, and apparel are dingy or stained, they may be discarded before useful life ends, wasting resources.

Positive steps

- **Time of essence.** Soak any stain immediately with water. The longer it remains, the tougher it is to remove.
- **Specific stains**
 - Blood: Soak in cold water. If stain remains rub with liquid soap.
 - Fruit: Stretch material over colander, and pour boiling water through.
 - Wine: Pour salt on immediately and let sit one hour. Then treat as fruit stain.
 - Coffee: Soak with lukewarm water. Dab with detergent or vinegar/water solution.
 - Grease: Spot with warm water; rub detergent in; rinse.
- **Towels.** Dinginess can be caused by hard water, being washed with darker item, or greasy hands. To counteract hard water, add a cup of white vinegar to the wash. Presoak towel in a non-chlorine bleach solution or, after washing, lay towel in sun to dry.
- **Detergents.** Choose a vegetable-based laundry product, such as Biokleen, Seventh Generation, or Ecover. For natural fabric softener, add a quarter cup of vinegar to the rinse cycle.
- **More information.** <http://www.artofmanliness.com/2013/03/28/how-to-remove-stains/>

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