



# Identifying Stains in Natural Stone

With the advent of today's Sealers, staining in natural stone is becoming rare. Washington Marble Works incorporates a 15 Year Sealer in daily production. With a minimum of proper care, your natural stone countertop will keep its beauty for a very long time.

## What Type of Stain Is It?

Identifying the type of stain on the stone surface is the key to removing it. Stains can be oil based, organic, metallic, biological, ink based, paint based, acid based. If you don't know what caused the stain, consider likely staining agents that may have been present. The following describes the types of stains you may have to deal with and the appropriate household chemicals to use.

Most Surface stains can often be removed by cleaning with an appropriate cleaning product or household chemical.

**Oil-based** (grease, plumbers' putty, tar, cooking oil, milk, cosmetics) An oil-based stain will darken the stone and normally must be chemically dissolved so the source of the stain can be flushed or rinsed away. Clean gently with a soft, liquid cleanser with one of the following: household detergent, mineral spirits, or acetone.

**Organic** (coffee, tea, wine, fruit, tobacco, paper, food, urine, leaves, bark, bird droppings) May cause a pinkish-brown stain and may disappear after the source of the stain has been removed. Clean with 12% hydrogen peroxide (hair bleaching strength) and a few drops of ammonia.

**Etch Marks** (caused by acids left on the surface of the stone) Some materials will etch the finish but not leave a stain. Others will both etch and stain. Contact your stone dealer or call a professional stone restorer for refinishing or re-polishing etched areas.

**Metal** (iron, rust, copper, bronze) Iron or rust stains are orange to brown in color and follow the shape of the staining object such as nails, bolts, screws, cans, flower pots, metal furniture. Copper and bronze stains appear as green or muddy-brown and result from the action of moisture on nearby or embedded bronze, copper or brass items. First use a pencil eraser and mild liquid cleaner such as Barkeeper's Friend (liquid). If the stain cannot be removed, consult with your fabricator about the use of a poultice.

**Biological** (algae, mildew, lichens, moss, fungi) Clean with diluted cleaning solution. Use a 1/2 cup of any of the following: ammonia, bleach, or hydrogen peroxide and a gallon of water.

**Reminder: do not mix bleach and ammonia.**

**Ink** (magic marker, pen, ink) On light colored stones, clean with bleach or hydrogen peroxide. On dark colored stones, clean with lacquer thinner or acetone.

**Paint** Small amounts can be removed with lacquer thinner or scraped off carefully with a razor blade. Do not use acids or flame tools to strip paint from stone. Paint strippers can etch the surface of the stone; re-polishing may be necessary. Normally, latex and acrylic paints will not cause staining. Oil-based paints, linseed oil, putty, caulks and sealants may cause oily stains. Refer to the section on oil-based stains.

**Water Spots and Rings** (surface accumulation of hard water) Buff with dry 0000 steel wool.

**Efflorescence** (a white powder that may appear on the surface of the stone) It is caused by the deposition of mineral salts carried by water from below the surface of the stone. When the water evaporates, it leaves the powdery substance. If the installation is new, use a microfiber cloth to wipe it away. You may have to do this several times as the stone dries out. Do not use water to remove the powder; it will only temporarily disappear. If the problem persists, contact your fabricator to help identify and remove the cause of the moisture.

**Scratches and Nicks** Slight surface scratches may be buffed with dry 0000 steel wool. Deeper scratches and nicks in the surface of the stone should be repaired and re-polished by a professional.



1016 Zehnder Street  
Sumner WA  
253-891-1823  
info@washingtonmarbleworks.com  
www.washingtonmarbleworks.com