



# BACK TO THE FUTURE IN THE LAUNDRY

An A-Z guide to problems you can solve  
without hazardous products

By making small changes, we can significantly reduce this pollution. So we've put together this list of safer, effective and thrifty solutions to your laundry needs. For some problems, there's even a couple of solutions for you to try.

Before you leap into these jobs, however, always use your judgement and test the application on a small area first. And please be careful using hot or boiling water. You're one resource that can never be replaced.

## First-aid for stains

- With stains, like comedy, it's all in the timing. So the best advice we can give you is to rinse the stained fabric in cold water immediately. As an alternative, if you can, use soda water with a little vinegar added. A dry stain will always be more difficult to remove and, if allowed to dry, some (especially those caused by meat juice, blood, fruit or egg white) may be impossible.
- If the stain persists after the rinse, soak it in a borax solution.
- Glycerine may help soften stubborn stains. The same goes for lemon juice.
- To avoid a ring developing around the area, treat around the stain first, then work in towards the centre.
- Remove any stains before putting the article through a normal wash cycle.
- Soak delicate fabrics in a weak borax and soap solution. (Borax acts as a soap booster and will dissolve most dirty spots.)

**You might think the amount of household detergents and other cleaning products that leave your home is small and has no impact. It's not just you, though, is it? It's you and your neighbour, the whole street, the whole suburb and the whole town. Together, the cumulative effect of all of us using these products has a massive impact on our waterways and the flora and fauna it supports. Including us.**

**Remember: Buying chemicals in bulk doesn't save you money if you throw half away. Consider the safer alternatives to household chemicals.**

## Three products you should always have on hand

Eucalyptus oil/spray: removes ball-point pen, chewing gum, grass, grease, gum, some glues, ink, nicotine, lipstick, oil, shoe polish and tar. Simply place an absorbent cloth under the stain, then dab or spray with eucalyptus oil, working towards the centre of the mark. Follow with a normal wash.

Methylated spirits: removes ball-point pen, felt pen, grass, grease, nicotine and shoe polish.

Washing soda (sodium carbonate): softens water, removes stains and is very good at removing grease. For best results, dissolve the crystals in hot water, then leave the greasy articles to soak before putting them through a normal wash cycle.

**AVOID • REDUCE • REUSE • RECYCLE**



## How to treat the 24 most common stains

### Alcohol

Alcohol stains can be a headache (like too much of the drink itself). Rinse in cold water with a little vinegar added. If the stain persists, soak in a borax solution.



### Ball-point pens

No need to write off a shirt if your pen has leaked.

- 1) Sponge with a cloth moistened with eucalyptus oil. Or...
- 2) Spray with eucalyptus oil, then soak in lemon juice prior to a normal wash. You may need to repeat the process.

### Beer

Homer Simpson's favourite stain. Dab with vinegar, then rinse in cold water.

### Beetroot

Here's how to beat beetroot stains on a cotton or linen cloth: dissolve 1 tablespoon of salt in cold water and soak.

### Blood

Soak in cold, salty water. Follow with a vinegar wash, if necessary.

If the blood is dry, make up a borax and water paste and apply it to the stain. Let it dry, then brush clean.

### Candle wax on a tablecloth

1) Place the cloth in a plastic bag, then put it in the freezer (or hold an ice-cube over the wax) until the wax is hard. Now scrape off the hardened wax using a sharp knife. If a stain remains, put an

absorbent cloth under the area and sponge it with eucalyptus oil. Work towards the centre of the mark to avoid a ring developing. Or...

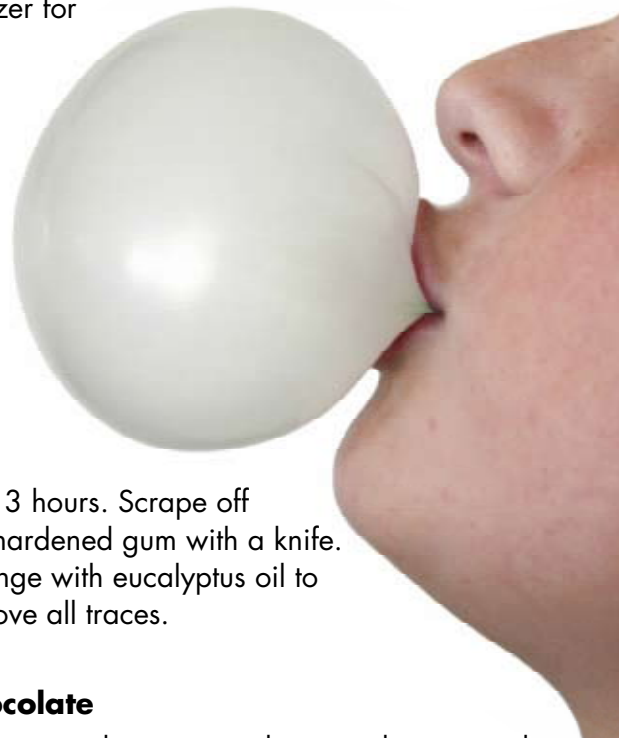
2) Scrape away the surface wax. Place pieces of blotting paper both underneath and on top of the stain. Iron the cloth using just a warm setting. Repeat until the stain has disappeared.

### Cement

Here's a concrete suggestion to get cement off your clothes. Combine 1 tablespoon of salt with 1 cup of vinegar and add to cold water. Soak the cement-stained clothes in the mixture. Follow with a normal wash.

### Chewing gum

Place the article in a plastic bag, then put it in the freezer for



2 to 3 hours. Scrape off the hardened gum with a knife. Sponge with eucalyptus oil to remove all traces.

### Chocolate

A joy to eat but a pain when it melts on your best new shirt. Sponge with a borax or vinegar solution.



### Coffee

Caffeine hit? Soak immediately in cold water, then sponge with either a borax or vinegar solution.

### Collars

Sponge the dirty collars with either eucalyptus oil, bicarb soda moistened with vinegar or soft-soap gel. Leave to absorb, then follow with a normal wash.

### Egg

How did Humpty Dumpty clean up after the accident? Sponge off with cold, soapy water. Rinse well.

### Fruit juice

- 1) Sponge with a cold borax or vinegar solution. Or...
- 2) Sponge with a cold, bicarb soda solution to neutralise the acid.

### Grass

Sporting parents everywhere will relate to this one. Here are two green ways to remove the green stains.

- 1) Usually, just soap and warm water will remove grass stains from cotton. If they don't, dampen the stained area with water, then sprinkle with white sugar. Roll up and leave for 1 hour. Follow with a normal wash. Or...
- 2) Sponge with methylated spirits or eucalyptus oil.



To prevent a ring forming, place an absorbent cloth under the stain and work towards the centre of the mark.

### Greasy overalls

Here are the mechanics of how to deal with greasy overalls. Add 1 teaspoon of eucalyptus oil plus 1 tablespoon of washing soda (or bicarb soda or borax) to the normal washing powder you use in your washing machine. Allow to soak, then proceed with a standard wash cycle.

### Mildew

Soak overnight in lemon juice or salty water. Wash in warm soapy water, rinse well and dry in the sun.

### Milk

No need to cry over spilt milk. Just soak in cold water, then wash normally.

### Perspiration

Perspiration stains? No sweat.

- 1) Soak in a warm vinegar or lemon juice solution for 30 minutes. Rinse well, then wash normally. Or...
- 2) Dissolve bicarb soda in warm water and soak the clothing for 1 hour. Follow with a normal wash.

### Rust

Rust never sleeps. But you can after using one of these two solutions.

- 1) Soak the material in warm vinegar, then rinse. Or...
- 2) Moisten salt (or borax) with lemon juice. Apply the paste to the rust marks and work it into the stain. Leave for 10 minutes, then rub clean. Rinse well with cold water.



### **Socks**

Kids' (and big kids') dirty socks clean up like new by soaking overnight in salty water, then washing normally.

### **Tea (black)**

See if this solution is your cup of tea. Sprinkle the stain with dry borax, then with droplets of cold water. Leave for 5 minutes, then wash in hot, soapy water.

### **Tea on linen**

Soak in borax and water, then wash normally. Even long-standing stains will fade with this treatment.

### **Wine (red)**

No tip for the wine waiter. But here's a fine tip for whoever's washing.

Sprinkle salt over the stain as soon as possible, then rinse in cold water and wash in the usual way.

### **Wine (white)**

- 1) Soak for 30 minutes in a solution of borax and hot water (1 tablespoon of borax dissolved in 1 cup of hot water). Follow with a normal wash. Or...
- 2) Pour soda water through the stain, then wash normally.



#### References:

Stewart, R (2002). Robin Stewart's Chemical Free Home. Black Inc. Melbourne, Victoria.

#### DISCLAIMER:

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