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## Natural Stone Care and Maintenance

Natural stone countertops require minimal maintenance. Adhering to the following guidelines will help keep your countertops just as beautiful as the day they were installed.

### Cleaning

- Clean all stone surfaces with a neutral cleaner and warm water, or a cleanser made for stone surfaces. Rinse the surface thoroughly after cleaning and dry with a soft cloth.
- Do not clean your stone with dish detergent or any cleaners that contain ammonia or bleach. Dish detergent and ammonia can leave a film on the surface of the stone, and bleach can discolor the stone.
- Clean spills immediately to prevent oils, acids, or water from staining, etching, or calcifying the stone.
- To prevent thermal shock, refrain from setting anything extremely hot or cold directly onto the stone. The use of trivets and cutting boards is always recommended.

### Sealing

- Natural stone countertops are sealed with a commercial sealer and color enhancer immediately after installation.
- Sealers provide extra resistance to water, oil, and acids, but do not make the stone stain-proof. Proper cleaning and care is still required to keep your stone in peak condition.
- Stone sealers are available at home hardware retail stores.
- Annual sealing is recommended for most natural stone.
- Some softer and more porous types of stone, such as marble, may require sealing more often.

To test if your natural stone top needs to be resealed, we recommend using the “water test.” Wet your stone top with some water. If the stone darkens where the moisture is present, then the stone is absorbing the moisture and requires sealing.

## Stain Removal

Identifying the type of stain is the first and most important step in getting rid of it. Various stains require different treatments, and what removes one type may not remove the others. The following describes types of stains and methods of removing them:

- Oil-based (grease, cooking oil, cosmetics)— Oil stains will darken the stone and must be chemically dissolved with a household detergent, mineral spirits, or acetone.
- Organic (coffee, tea, wine, fruit, food, leaves)—Possibly pinkish-brown in color, and can be removed with 12% hydrogen peroxide or a few drops of ammonia.
- Metal (rust, iron, copper, bronze) - Brown or orange in color and must be removed with a poultice.
- Biological (algae, mildew, fungi, moss) - Clean with a half cup of ammonia, bleach, or hydrogen peroxide, and a gallon of water. Do not mix bleach and ammonia.
- Ink (marker, pen) - On light-colored stones, clean with bleach or hydrogen peroxide. On dark stones, clean with lacquer thinner or acetone.
- Paint—Small amounts of paint can be scraped with a razor blade or removed with lacquer thinner. Large amounts of paint coverage must be removed with a paint stripper. Paint strippers can etch the stone, and re-polishing may be required. Paint stripper contains caustic ingredients, and use of rubber gloves and eye protection is highly advised.
- Water spots—Buff with steel wool
- Etch marks (caused by acids left on the surface) - Requires re-finishing or re-polishing
- Efflorescence (a white powder that may appear on the surface of the stone) - Caused by mineral deposits of salts carried by water below the surface of the stone. The powder can be removed by dust mopping or vacuuming, and may require several attempts as the stone dries out. Do not use water to remove the powder.