

## STAINS AND STAIN REMOVAL

A stain is a spot or a mark made on a fabric which gives a colour that is different from the rest of the surface of the fabric. There are different types of stains. Stains differ in their characteristics and methods of removal. Different stain removing agents are available for removing specific types of stains.

### Types of Stains

There are many ways of classifying stains. They can be classified in the following two ways:

#### 1. Classification According to the Materials of the Stains:

- a. Vegetable stains: These are from foods such as fruit, tea, coffee, cocoa, and grass.
- b. Animal Stains: These often contain animal protein which is “set” or hardened by heat, e.g. blood, egg, gravy, milk, etc.
- c. Grease Stains: These can be of animal or vegetable or mineral origin, e.g engine oil, palm oil, animal fat, etc.
- d. Mineral Stains: e.g. paint, ink, medicines, rust, coal-tar, shoe polish, etc.

#### 2. Classification According to the Form of the Stain

There are three forms, namely:

- a. Absorbed Stains: These are caused by liquids which penetrate the fabric easily and become absorbed by it, e.g. tea, coffee, beer, and medicine.
- b. Built-up stains: These tend to stay on the surface and do not flow into the fibres of the fabric, e.g lip stick, crayon, ball-point pen ink.
- c. Compound Stains: These are absorbed into the fabric and also leave a residue on the surface as do the built-up stains, e.g. blood stains. Some part of blood is absorbed while others stay on top of the fabric.

### Stain Removing Agents

1. Methylated spirit is usually used neat. It is inflammable and should not be used near a naked flame.
2. Turpentine is good for fresh paint.
3. Nail vanish remover is good for nail vanish, ball point pen ink.
4. Carbon tetrachloride is good for removal of grease, oil, and stains with a greasy base.
5. Enzyme washing powder will remove protein stains.
6. Laundry ammonia can be used on acid stains such as milk.
7. Bleaches can remove stains on specific fabrics, e.g cotton.
8. Hydrogen peroxide is a mild oxidizing bleach that can be used on wool and silk.
9. Glycerine can be used to remove chocolate and fruit juice stains.
10. Vinegar is a mild acid which can be used to remove excess blue from over-blued articles and for brightening colours.
11. Lemon juice is also acid. It can be used with common salt to remove ink, iron rust, and medicine stains.
12. Sour milk can be used to remove ink and iron rust stains. Sour milk contains lactic acid.
13. Fresh tomatoes can be used to remove ink stains.
14. Common salt can be used for dissolving blood stains and absorbing ink stains.

Most of these materials are poisonous. They should, therefore, be labelled and locked in a cupboard out of the reach of children.

### Stain Removal

Any special stains on the articles should be removed before washing. Hot water used in washing can set some stains such as blood and make them very difficult to remove.

### Soaking or Steeping

Heavily soiled or very dirty articles that are colour-fast should be soaked according to the type of the fabric being washed. White cotton and linen articles can be soaked for forty-five

minutes in a solution of bleach before washing. Always follow the instructions on the bleach container. Hand-kerchiefs, especially those used by cough patients, should be soaked in salt water. Do not soak articles that are not colour-fast.