

Care & Maintenance of Marble Countertops

Natural stone, with its rich colorations and wonderful feel, is Mother Nature's gift to our homes. But this beautiful, popular kitchen and bathroom [countertop option](#) is pricey—and for all its durability, it's got a delicate side. That's why it's crucial to protect your investment by caring for marble correctly. This guide will take you through how to clean marble countertops, address stains, and seal the surfaces regularly, but first face a stone cold fact: Marble, composed mainly of calcium carbonate, is sensitive to acidic solutions. This means any acid, whether a splash of [lemon](#) juice, a damp margarita glass, or an acidic cleaner such as vinegar, can eat away at the surface, creating dull spots known as etches. Some folks consider etches part of a countertop's character, while others opt to grind down the top layer and re-polish the surface when enough etches accumulate. So strive to keep your countertops an acid-free zone, and now read on to become a master in [marble](#) protection and maintenance.



Cleaning Marble Countertops



General cleaning is so simple—another reason for marble’s popularity. Just be sure to avoid products containing acid, including [lemon juice](#) and vinegar. Though you can buy non-abrasive stone cleaner specifically tailored to marble, still read labels carefully to avoid damaging your surface. Alternatively, you can save money and use a mild, non-abrasive, pH neutral (non-acidic) soap mixed with water, which is all you really need to clean marble [countertops](#).

MATERIALS AND TOOLS Available on Amazon

- [Marble stone cleaner](#)
- [Warm water](#)
- [Gentle dish soap](#)
- [Spray bottle](#)
- [Dish cloth](#)
- [Soft, absorbent towel](#)

STEP 1

If not using marble cleaner, mix a squirt of gentle, non-abrasive [dish soap](#) with warm water in a spray bottle and spray the counter generously. Scrub gently and wipe soapy solution off with a clean wet cloth. Repeat process until all soapy residue is gone.

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STEP 2

Rub the countertop dry, and buff with a soft absorbent towel.

Removing Stains from Marble Countertops

Banishing stains from marble can be trickier than a routine cleaning. The key is correctly identifying the origin of the stain and then applying the appropriate chemical or poultice (a paste-like cleaning agent). Think of the materials listed below



as your stain-fighting arsenal. Note, too, that the sooner you address a stain, the better your chance of getting rid of it.

Caution: Never mix cleaning agents or chemicals, as the result can be toxic, even lethal. Before cleaning, always test the cleaning agent on an inconspicuous location to determine its suitability and make certain it does not damage the surface. Wear appropriate clothing such as gloves and [protective eyewear](#), and work in a well-ventilated area.

MATERIALS AND TOOLS

- Soft liquid cleanser
- Mineral spirits
- Acetone
- Ammonia
- 12 percent hydrogen peroxide solution
- 20 percent hydrogen peroxide solution
- Bleach
- Lacquer thinner
- 0000-steel wool pads
- Razor blade
- Sponge
- Gloves
- Protective eyewear
- Flour
- Pre-mixed commercial poultice

OIL-BASED STAINS

An oil based stain like grease, cooking [oil](#), milk, or makeup will darken the stone and must be dealt with chemically. Clean gently with one of the following: soft, liquid cleanser with bleach, ammonia, mineral spirits, or acetone.

ORGANIC STAINS

Address coffee, tea, wine, fruit, tobacco, paper, and most other food stains (which generally have a pinkish-brown appearance) with a 12 percent hydrogen peroxide solution and a few drops of ammonia. Wipe over the stain with a clean cloth. Rinse with a wet cloth and dry with a chamois.

BIOLOGICAL STAINS

Combat mildew stains with a solution of three parts household [bleach](#) with one part water and a dash of dishwashing detergent in a spray bottle. Mist the surface thoroughly and repeat application until the stain disappears. Rinse with clean clear water and dry.

INK STAINS

To remove ink stains from dark colored stone, dip a cotton swab in acetone and apply directly to the surface. For lighter colored stone, use a 20 percent hydrogen peroxide solution. Keep a soft cloth or sponge dampened with water handy to wipe away the cleaning agent promptly after the stain has been removed. Treating large volume ink stains or those that have set in requires a poultice.

1. Place between 1/4 cup and 1/2 cup of flour in a shallow bowl. For dark-colored stone, use acetone or, for light stone, 20 percent hydrogen peroxide, adding it to the flour one teaspoon at a time to form a paste.
2. Apply the flour poultice to the area with plastic spatula or spoon. Cover with plastic wrap and press firmly. Poke holes in the plastic wrap with a toothpick or fork. Allow the poultice to dry for up to 24 hours.
3. Remove and discard the [plastic wrap](#) and allow the poultice to continue drying. Once completely dry, remove and discard. If any ink mark remains, repeat the process.
4. When the stain is gone to your satisfaction, apply a small amount of neutral pH soap, such as Dove, to a clean, soft sponge dampened with water.



Clean the area where the stain was and remove soap residue with a clean dampened sponge.

Removing Paint from Marble Countertops

Remove a small drip with lacquer thinner dabbed on with a clean cloth or scrape it off carefully with a razor blade. A larger paint stain will require a commercial [paint stripper](#) that could cause etching and may require re-polishing after removal. Follow the manufacturer's directions for use of these products, and flush the area thoroughly with clean water. Be sure to ventilate the area and wear rubber gloves and eye protection.

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Removing Water Spots and Rings from Marble Countertops

Buff out water spots with a dry, 0000-rated steel wool pad. That same pad may do the trick for smaller scratches and nicks. Larger problems may require re-polishing. In future, use coasters and trivets on [counters](#).

Removing Metal Stains from Marble Countertops

Metal stains caused by iron or rust range from orange to brown in color, while copper or bronze stains will be green or muddy brown—all are stubborn, deep-seated rust especially. Tackle with a poultice:

1. Mix premixed commercial poultices (available at stone maintenance supply companies) with water to the consistency of a thick peanut butter.
2. Slather it on the stain in a thickness between $\frac{1}{4}$ and $\frac{1}{2}$ inch. Use a wood or plastic spatula to spread the paste evenly.
3. Cover with plastic wrap and secure sides all around with painter's tape. Allow it to dwell for 24 to 48 hours.
4. Remove the plastic and allow the poultice to dry and "pull" the stain from the stone.



5. Once the poultice is dry to the touch, remove with the wood or plastic scraper. Rinse the area with distilled water and buff with a soft cloth.

Sealing Marble Countertops

Because marble is porous, a sealant is recommended as a barrier that can possibly keep a spill from becoming a stain. Experts suggest re-sealing every three to six months, but quality sealing products, available from any home improvement retailer, are simple to apply.

MATERIALS AND TOOLS

- Mild dish soap
- Single-edged razor blade
- Plastic scraper
- Chamois
- Clean cloths
- Acetone
- Impregnating or penetrating sealer for marble countertops

STEP 1

Clear everything off the counters so the entire surface is accessible. Clean the surface with mild [dish soap](#). Dry with a clean cloth.

STEP 2

Remove any built-up residue from cleansers, cooking grease, or other substances might remain with a plastic scraper or (carefully!) a single-edged razor blade. To use a blade, hold it at an angle and lightly pass it over the marble.

STEP 3



Use acetone, if necessary, to strip off old sealer and remove residues from such products as window [cleaners](#). Apply with a clean cloth and rinse with wet cloth, then dry with a chamois—do not let the counter air dry.

STEP 4

Read and follow all directions on the sealant's packaging. In most cases, application is a matter of pouring the sealer directly onto the surface and spreading it evenly with a clean white cloth. Leave it to soak for the time specified in your products directions, usually around three to four minutes.

STEP 5

Sprinkle additional amounts of sealer over the treated areas. This will allow you to easily collect and gather excess sealer during cleanup. Use a clean dry cloth to remove any sealer that has not soaked in.

STEP 6

Apply a second coat of sealer only if your product's specific directions indicate it is necessary. Otherwise, one coat will be enough.