



## INTRODUCTION TO STONE CARE

Natural stone can provide a lifetime of beauty and pleasure, provided it is properly cared for. Learn why stone is unique and unlike any other surface, why it requires special care and how to care for it properly. It is crucial that you understand these. These are merely guidelines for your information. It is best to contact a professional natural stone cleaner.

For additional details, questions or concerns visit the American Natural Stone Institute website [www.naturalstoneinstitute.org](http://www.naturalstoneinstitute.org) or contact them at 1-440-250-9222

### **Stone is absorbent**

Although we usually think of stone as “hard”, it is a porous material. Natural stone has varying degrees of porosity depending on the type of stone. If left unsealed, spills and everyday messes can easily penetrate the surface. The liquid eventually evaporates but the stain is left behind.

Highly acidic substances such as orange and lemon juice, coffee and wine, will etch acid sensitive stone, and leave a dull mark. Most of the stone that we offer are sensitive to acids. This is the main reason limestone, marble and travertine are not widely used for kitchen counter tops.

### **Benefits of Sealing**

The best way to prevent stains is to treat the surface with a protective sealer. The sealer is a liquid that fills the pores and repels spills on the surface, allowing you time to completely wipe it away. It is important to note that a sealer only slows down the process; it does not make the natural stone stain-proof. It buys you time to clean the spill before the liquid penetrates the stone.

Fluorochemical technology is currently the most advanced technology available, providing an excellent shield against both water-base and oil-base stains. Labs of all major sealer companies are currently working on nano technology base sealer. These sealers were recently released and proved to be very good. The micro-molecular formula bonds with the stone surface to deliver wear resistance and durability.



And because the sealer reacts with the stone, you no longer have to worry about its porosity. It works on all types of stones.

This scientific advancement allows the use of limestone and marble in applications that would have been impossible 20 years ago. Note that a sealer does not make the stone harder or stronger.

### Stone needs specialty cleaners

Like any surface in ones' home, natural stone also needs to be cleaned to maintain its beauty. However natural stone requires cleaning products specially designed for the stone's unique mineral composition.

Most popular general-purpose cleaners will etch or damage the stone, or degrade the sealer, therefore removing protective properties and allowing the stone to become susceptible to stains. Cleaning products containing too much acids or alkalines, will etch the stone. Scouring powders and abrasives will scratch the surface. Therefore, **do not use** household cleaners such as "Ajax" and "409" on the stone surfaces.

Stonetech has been a trusted stone cleaner for over 20 years. Now own by Laticrete, their products are available online. [www.laticrete.com/en/products/stonetech-stone-tile-cleaner](http://www.laticrete.com/en/products/stonetech-stone-tile-cleaner)

**Please follow the manufacturer instructions and always test the products in an inconspicuous area.**



## **Proper cleaning**

Maintenance cleaning with a Ph-balanced (7), neutral cleaner will help remove soils that normal dusting or damp mopping leave behind. It also helps to keep the stone dry and free of dust and sandy soil, to minimize wear patterns from everyday use. Special cleaners for stone will never break down the protective sealer. In fact, some cleaners contain protective properties which reinforce the sealer and prolong stain resistance.

For heavier cleaning jobs, using cleaners formulated for stone will effectively remove tough grime and messes yet be gentle on the surface. You may have to reseal the stone after a heavy duty cleaning.

## **Conclusion**

Protective sealers will provide the best defense against everyday stains and specially formulated cleaners will safely remove spills and messes. By following these simple care solutions the natural stone will stay beautiful.



## Stone Care by Location

### Floor Surfaces

Dust mop interior floors frequently using a clean, non-treated, dry dust mop. Sand, dirt and grit do the most damage to natural stone surfaces due to their abrasiveness. Mats or area rugs inside and outside an entrance will help to minimize the potential damage from these particles. In addition, be careful when using a vacuum cleaner as the metal or plastic attachments or wheels may scratch the surface. Damp mop the stone floor with a diluted solution of a neutral cleaner designed for stone. Keep off floor until completely dry, as wet stone floors may be slippery.

### Bath and Other Wet Areas

Periodic use of a neutral stone cleaner will remove any soap scum or hard water deposits that may have formed. In the bath, or other wet areas, using a squeegee after each use can minimize soap scum and hard water deposit buildup.

### Countertops and Vanities

Although La Maison Nicolas does not sell stone slabs at this time, some clients may use the tiles or mosaics on vanities and countertops. Use a neutral, pH-balanced cleaner (7), specially formulated for stone, on a regular basis to remove residues from cooking oils and everyday food spills, as well as hairspray or other cosmetics. Be careful with common foods and drinks. Many contain acids that may etch or dull the stone surface. Also, some common toiletries (i.e., perfume, toothpaste, mouthwash) contain acids and other ingredients that may damage the stone surface or degrade the sealer.

## Stone Protection FAQs

### Why does stone porosity differ by stone?

Stone comes from quarries which are located all over the world. Stones have different porosity because of their mineral composition and geological formation. Depending on the process in which the stones were formed, and where in the world they were formed, affects the porosity of the stone.

### Why should I seal my natural stone?

Protected stone will be easier to clean, resist staining, and provide a safer and healthier environment. Considering the investment, why wouldn't you provide the surface with the maximum protection possible?



### **What is an impregnating/penetrating sealer?**

A sealer is like a coat of armor for your stone, tile and grout. A sealer will decrease the opportunity that anything can stain or harm your surface. At La Maison Nicolas, we encourage the use of penetrating sealers, allowing you to retain the natural beauty of the surface. Wax for Terra Cotta would be considered a Coating sealer.

### **Will my natural stone look glossy after sealing or enhancing?**

No, unless you selected a topical, high gloss sealer. If properly applied, clear impregnating sealers will leave your surface looking natural. Enhancing sealers are designed to darken the stone while retaining the original polished, matte or honed look.

### **How much time between coats of sealer?**

Always follow the directions on the label. Most sealers require waiting only one hour between coats. Be patient, a little extra time can produce excellent results.

### **How often do I need to seal my stone?**

In theory, every 2 years for an interior floor and every 4 years outside. This is based on the use of the materials: in areas of intense use or heavy foot traffic, it may be best to reseal every year. Use and ongoing maintenance greatly affect sealer durability.

### **Is one coat of sealer enough for natural stone?**

Most stones and grout will require two coats. A few of the more absorbent stones may need additional coats to be properly sealed. Your installer or contractor will be able to assist you in determining your needs.

### **Is it really necessary to seal stone outdoors? What do I need to protect against?**

Outdoors can be very harsh on your stone. There are things that can affect your stone that are visible, like pollen and dirt, and then there are things that are not quite that easy to see, like UV Rays. You make an investment in your home by putting natural stone in your yard. It would be worth it to seal the stone and preserve its natural beauty. Sealing will give you maximum protection against rain, other chemicals, oils from trees and plants, and all of those wonderful and fun-filled outside barbeques.



## Stone Cleaning FAQs

No matter how careful you are; spills are going to happen. A quick response and the right solutions can keep spills from damaging the stone or degrading the sealer.

### **Etch (dull) Marks**

Highly acidic substances such as orange juice, coffee, vinegar, wine, tomato products, mustard and many soft drinks, will “etch” most marble, limestone and travertine. Sealing allows you time to wipe up a spill, but it cannot stop the chemical reaction that may leave a dull mark.

General cleaners not specifically designed for natural stone are not recommended. These may etch away the polish, discolor the surface, scratch the stone or degrade the sealer. Professional refinishing is the best way, to permanently remove etch marks and restore the natural stone’s even finish.

### **Food Spills**

Scoop up the food as soon as possible. Blot with dry, white cloth. Spray the area with a neutral stone cleaner and wipe off excess with a clean cloth.

### **Liquid Spills**

Blot away the excess with a clean, dry, white cloth, while turning the cloth frequently. Spray the area with a neutral stone cleaner and wipe off excess with a clean cloth.

### **Mud**

Remove the mud with a soft plastic or nylon brush. Let dry. Spray affected area with a neutral stone cleaner. Wipe dry with a clean cloth. If the stain remains, contact a professional cleaner.

### **Oily Stains**

If you identify the stain as having an oil base (from foods like salad, cooking oils, butter or some cosmetics) you may be able to remove the stain using a poultice. A poultice will pick up the stain from deep within the stone. This is a difficult technique, it is best to have a professional cleaner do the job.

### **How do I keep my stone clean?**

We recommend using a cleaner specially formulated for natural stone. General purpose cleaning products can damage natural stone, or the sealer applied, so don’t just pick anything off of the shelf at the grocery store. Improperly formulated cleaners or those with acids (such as porcelain or tile cleaners) may etch the surface of the stone. Make sure that you select a cleaner specially formulated for natural stone care.



### **How can I clean mildew off of my grout in the shower? Is there preventative care?**

Natural Stone cleaners will help clean your grout and help remove some of the mildew. If there is any remaining mildew growth you can get a 50/50 solution of water and household bleach to clean those areas. Make sure that you rinse the area with clean water thoroughly before continuing to seal. Once this has been done, you need to wait for the area to dry before resealing.

### **I put something down on my honed limestone floor and it left a white ring mark on it. How can I clean this spot?**

This kind of discoloration and ring mark that you are noticing is likely not a stain, but an actual etch mark. Etch marks occur on limestone, marbles, travertine, and other stones of this nature, due to acids or other chemicals reacting with the minerals in the stone. This causes the stone to feel rough and look a little discolored, usually lighter. In order to remove these there would have to be a refinishing process done to restore its original look. It is best to contact a professional stone cleaner to have the best result.

## **How to Seal**

People often assume that natural stone is "stain-proof," however all stone is porous to some degree. If not properly treated with a protective sealer, water, oils or other liquids can easily penetrate the stone, leaving behind unwanted stains.

### **Directions**

Read entire label before using. Use only as directed. Always test in a small inconspicuous area with a 24-hour cure time, to determine ease of application and desired results. Allow new grout installations to cure for a minimum of 72 hours prior to application. Make sure the surface is clean, and free of waxes and coatings. Surface temperature should be between 50°F and 80°F. Ensure that the area is well-ventilated during application and until the surface is dry. Keep children and pets out of the area until foot traffic resumes.

1. Mask any surfaces not intended to be treated.
2. Apply sealer evenly and liberally using a paint pad, roller or brush. DO NOT APPLY PRODUCT WITH A SPRAYER.
3. Allow sealer to penetrate the surface for 5-10 minutes while spreading excess sealer over entire area for even penetration. Remove excess sealer by wiping surface thoroughly with clean, dry towels.
4. Apply second and third coats as needed for porous absorbent surfaces, 1 to 2 hours after previous coat, following directions in steps 2–3.
5. 15–30 minutes after final application, wipe entire surface with clean, dry towels to remove any excess sealer. To remove any residue, reapply a thin coat of sealer, wait 2–3 minutes, then rub lightly with a white nylon pad. Wipe again thoroughly with clean, dry towels.



6. A full cure is achieved after 24–72 hours. Foot traffic may begin in 6–8 hours. If needed sooner, cover floor with red rosin paper to protect it until full cure is achieved.
7. Clean tools used during application with water.

### **Available Sizes (and Coverage)**

Quart: 10-115 sq. ft.

Gallon: 50-450 sq. ft.

Expected Wear: 1-3 years on interior surfaces & 3-5 years on exterior surfaces.

## Stone Care Do's and Don'ts

### **DO:**

- DO use coasters under glasses, especially if they contain alcohol or citrus juices.
- DO use trivets or mats under hot dishes or cookware.
- DO use place mats under china, ceramics, silver or other objects that may scratch your stone's surface.
- DO place a small rug or mat at entryways to trap dirt and sand from normal foot traffic.
- DO dust countertops, islands, vanities and floors frequently.
- DO blot up spills immediately to minimize permanent damage to the stone.
- DO clean surfaces regularly with neutral cleaners designed for stone.

### **DON'T:**

- DON'T use vinegar, bleach, ammonia, other general-purpose cleaners, bathroom cleaners or tub and tile cleaners.
- DON'T use abrasive cleaners such as dry cleansers or soft cleansers.
- DON'T use alkaline cleaners not specifically formulated for stone.

