

Sleep Stories

Supporting Your Dreams

HOW TO GET ANY STAIN OUT OF A MATTRESS

By
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Picture this: You're propped up in bed on a Saturday morning, window blinds open to the soft sunshine, settling in with a news app and a mug full of fresh coffee. You lean forward to take that much-anticipated first sip when—GAH!—your partner (or your cat or your kid) chooses exactly that moment to leap onto the bed for a snuggle. Now that rich, dark brew is all over your PJs, sheets, and, worst of all, your mattress.

Stains usually void a mattress warranty, but getting them out is fairly simple if you act fast and take the right steps. We consulted cleaning experts for this handy guide to the best way to remove just about any stain from the fabric of your mattress.

Basic Stain-Removal Plan

No matter what kind of stain you're targeting, be sure check the care label on your mattress for manufacturer recommendations or cautions, says Nancy Bock, senior vice president of education at the [American Cleaning Institute](#). Never drench a mattress with water or liquid cleaners. "Mattresses aren't designed to get wet, especially memory foam," she says. "They don't dry quickly, and if yours stays damp for some time it can start to smell or even develop mold and mildew."

Rubbing alcohol, hydrogen peroxide, vinegar, laundry detergent, citrus-based household cleaners, and dish soap are all good stain removers, advises Meg Roberts, president of [Molly Maid](#) cleaning service. But her favorite cleaner is a simple combo of **3/4 cup warm water, 1/4 cup vinegar, and a tablespoon of dish soap in a spray bottle.**

Experts recommend this basic four-step plan for treating most minor mattress stains:

- 1. Absorb.** For wet stains, blot with a dry towel until no more liquid can be absorbed. "Do not rub or scrub. Blot and use pressure to remove as much wetness as possible," says Bock. For dry mattress stains, scrape off or vacuum up any excess mess, slightly dampen using a wet cloth, then move to step 2.
- 2. Add soap.** Lightly spray or dab the cleaner you're using onto the area. Some stains, such as blood, need to sit with the cleaning solution on for 10 to 15 minutes. (See stain-by-stain specifics in the next section.)
- 3. Blot.** Press and blot with a dry cloth or paper towels to absorb liquid. Keep going until you can't get any more liquid out. Repeat steps 2 and 3 if necessary.
- 4. Air dry.** Putting the mattress outside in the sun is ideal, but if that's not possible, just get as much air circulation and sunlight in the room as you can, says Bock. Open windows, curtains, or blinds, and set up a fan. Depending on the size of the stain, it may take several hours to dry completely.

Optional: Deodorize Once the mattress is totally dry, sprinkle a little bit of baking soda over the area (a sifter works well, Bock says) to absorb lingering odors.

Stain-by-Stain Specifics

Try these specific cleaners and techniques recommended by Roberts for the absolute best stain removal results.

Blood

What to use: White vinegar or 3% hydrogen peroxide.

How to use: Pour a small amount of vinegar or peroxide directly onto the stain. • If using vinegar, let soak for 10 minutes, blot dry, and repeat, if necessary. • If using peroxide, blood stains will foam up on contact, notes Bock. Blot the foam away, then let the area sit for 5 minutes. • Dab with a towel dipped in cold water to “rinse” away vinegar or peroxide. Then blot and air dry per steps 3 and 4 of the basic plan above.

Urine

What to use: An enzyme-based upholstery cleaner, such as one meant for pet stains. “These detergents are better at breaking down odor-causing proteins,” Roberts explains.

How to use: After absorbing excess urine (per step 1 of the basic plan), apply cleaner and let sit for 15 minutes to let the enzymes do their work. Dab with a towel dipped in cool water to “rinse.” Then move on to the last two steps of the basic plan: blot and air dry.

Pet Urine

What to use: An enzyme-based upholstery cleaner specially formulated for pet stains.

How to use: After step 1 of the basic plan, soak up even more liquid by adding weight and pressure: Put several paper towels or a damp terry cloth towel over the area and place some heavy books on top for a few minutes. Repeat using dry towels until the area is barely damp. • Dab with a towel dipped in cool water to “rinse;” let sit for 1 minute. • Apply enzyme cleaner and let sit for 15 minutes or per instructions on product label. • Thoroughly soak up liquid as above, adding weight by pressing down with your body or some heavy books, then air dry. • If odors or visible soiling linger after drying, try a pet-odor neutralizer or carpet stain remover next, suggests Roberts.

Vomit

What to use: Baking soda and an enzyme-based cleaner.

How to use: Scrape the surface clean, then blot with rags or paper towels to absorb as much moisture as possible. • Pour on a generous amount of baking soda to absorb odors and excess moisture. Let sit for 15 minutes, then vacuum up using the upholstery or crevice tool. (Be sure to clean the vacuum canister thoroughly afterward, Roberts says.) • Apply a pet-stain product or enzyme-based cleaner, or a liberal amount of Roberts’ vinegar/dish soap solution. • Absorb liquid again and air dry. Repeat the whole process if any odor remains.

Coffee

What to use: Roberts' vinegar/dish soap solution. But instead of putting it in a spray bottle, use a bowl or dish.

How to use: Absorb liquid if the spill is fresh; slightly dampen with warm water if it's dry. • Carefully blot with a light-colored, dry cloth, starting at the edges and moving inward to keep color from spreading. Continue until no more brown transfers onto your cloth. • Dip a clean cloth in the dish of vinegar solution and blot onto stain from outside edges moving inward. Blot dry. • If there was cream and/or sugar in the coffee, also dab a mixture of laundry detergent and warm water onto the stain, "rinse" by dabbing with a fresh wet cloth, then blot dry.

Wine

What to use: Cold water and salt, or [Wine Away](#), a spray formulated specifically for red wine stains. Plenty of cleaning products say they remove wine stains but this one really does, says Roberts. It also works on red stains from spaghetti sauce, juice, or cough syrup.

How to use: Absorb as much wine as you can with cloth or paper towels. • If using Wine Away, apply according to label instructions for cleaning carpet. • If using salt, dab cold water onto the stain with a wet cloth and blot away liquid. Sprinkle salt all over the soiled area; wait three minutes. Dab with cold water and rub into stain. Blot dry. Sprinkle, rub, and blot as many times as you need to to lift the stain; then air dry.

Oily Food or Lotions

What to use: Baking soda; dish soap

How to use: Scrape off as much of the grease as you can. "A credit card works well for this," says Donna Smallin Kuper, certified house cleaning technician and author of [Clear the Clutter, Find Happiness](#). • Sprinkle with baking soda, let sit for 20 minutes; scrape away baking soda and vacuum area. • If soiling remains, grab some original blue Dawn dish soap, recommends Smallin Kuper. (It's famous for removing oil, even from [sea birds in oil spills](#).) Mix a few squirts of dish soap into warm water and dab onto stain. • Blot with dry towel to absorb wetness, then air dry.