

## **General Care and Maintenance Guide – Natural Stone**

What we are really talking about here is protecting your investment!

Sealing stone surfaces buys you time to clean spills up before stains occur. Please note that sealers cannot stop the process of etching (dulling of the surface) by acidic substances (e.g. Lemon Juice).

Regular cleaning is important to guard against the build-up of potentially damaging influences. It is advisable to reserve cleaning cloths and mops exclusively for use on your stone finishes – residue from other cleaning products can work against our best efforts.

Never use commercial cleaners on stone surfaces. They are generally not PH neutral and will affect the stone surface over time. A diluted mixture of Methylated Spirits (not dyed) and water (70/30) and paper towel / microfibre cloth is suitable everyday cleaner. Always dry off surfaces.

For more stubborn marks we highly recommend the use of “Stone Foam” which is suitable for all stone surfaces. (When using “Stone Foam” take care not to scrub surfaces hard as you may alter the gloss level slightly). For your convenience this product can be purchased directly from Project Stone Australia.

We recommend the use of clean white (or colourless) cloths for bench tops etc., and cotton mops for cleaning floors. There is no problem using synthetic sponges, but they do tend to leave streaks on a highly polished surface. Discard cleaning cloths when they become soiled. Check your mops from time to time – discard them if the strands are worn, or starting to become dirty or discoloured. Similarly, check all metal components for signs of corrosion – we sight the example of one instance where flakes of rust coming loose from an old mop left small but noticeable stains on a new marble tiled floor. A little extra attention to these small details will pay dividends over the life of your marble or granite finish.

### **Floor Areas**

If you have a natural stone floor area and choose to vacuum, please take extra care to avoid metal components of the suction head coming into contact with the floor – these have the potential to scratch stone surfaces. It’s also advisable to fit felt or rubber under chairs or heavy furniture. Generally, we recommend the purchase of a commercial fringe mop for day to day removal of dust and grit. A fringe mop is a fast, easy to use alternative, there is little weight on the mop head and just a couple of minutes at a time will be enough for the average feature floor area. A vigorous shake outside to remove grit and you have just completed a large part of your preventative maintenance program. Of course, you will have to be extra careful if you have gravel outside your entrance – make sure there are good mats both inside and out to remove as much of the offending grit as early as possible.

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## ***Bench Tops***

Entertaining? With crowds of people in your house the potential for spills increases proportionally, and your stone bench top is directly “in the line of fire “. Cooking oils, exotic recipes, sauces, wines, fruit juices and soft drinks – all present in abundance at any family gathering or party. It is important at any time to clean up spills as soon as they are detected; the longer they are left unattended the greater the risk of a mark occurring.

This is sometimes easier said than done with a house full of people, so take a few minutes before you retire to check your stone finishes. As effective as Marble & Granite sealers are, they cannot guarantee to protect every natural stone from every spill, in every situation – especially if it has been left to stand overnight. So take a little time, and wipe up spills as soon as possible.

## ***Bathrooms and Toilets***

Marbles, Limestone’s and Travertine are usually chosen for these areas because their colourings tend to be “softer” and more elegant. However, compared to granite, the polished surface is also softer, so a little extra care and attention is warranted. Sealing a vanity top will protect against everyday spills and staining, but there are some influences found in the bathroom that will attack the stone itself – which will manifest itself by etching or removing the polish. Be careful with perfumes, toothpaste and nail polish solvents – just as you use a soap dish it’s advisable to find a suitable glass or ceramic tray to stand your toiletries in. We also recommend that, if you choose to “blue” the loo, be mindful of spills and wipe them immediately.

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## ***Do's and Don'ts***

- Do have your natural stone surfaces professionally sealed with a penetrating stone sealer.
- Do dust and mop floors frequently.
- Do clean surfaces with diluted Metho (not dyed) & water, or Stone Foam. This products can be purchased directly from Project Stone Australia. Please contact our office.
- Do thoroughly rinse and dry off stone surfaces after use, e.g. Shower areas, which will help to reduce the build-up of soap scum and mould.
- Do clean up spills immediately.
- Do protect floor surfaces with non –slip mats or rugs and countertop surfaces with coasters, trivets or placemats
- Do test any cleaning/sealing product on a small, less obvious area for etching or discolouration prior to using any product on your stone surface
- Don't use vinegar, or other supermarket surface cleaners on any stone surface.
- Don't use cleaners that contain acid such as bathroom cleaners, grout cleaners or tub & tile cleaners. Do not use Chemical cleaners such as supermarket/commercial counter-top cleaners, such as Windex, Spray and Wipe etc as they are not PH Neutral and will damage the surface overtime.
- Don't use abrasive cleaners such as Ajax, Jif etc. Heavy use of abrasives can dull the polish on all stone surfaces.
- Don't mix bleach and ammonia; this combination creates a toxic and lethal gas.

Please note that this is a general guide only and we recommend that professional assistance be sought regarding repairs, stain removal, repolishing etc.