

THE ULTIMATE
GUIDE TO
HEALTHY
CARPET
CLEANING



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INTRODUCTION

Can your carpet be a breeding ground for allergens and bacteria?

Your carpets make your home feel like a home, but they can turn out to be a breeding ground for allergens and bacteria if not properly cared for. However, before you dial up your local carpet cleaning company and have them dish out a load of chemicals onto your flooring, read through this informative guide to make sure you choose the right method to keep your carpeting clean, so you and your family can safely live and play on healthy carpets. In this guide we explore all of the different professional methods of cleaning carpet as well as a thorough DIY guide.



IS CARPET CLEANING NECESSARY?

While there are some conflicting viewpoints regarding whether carpet cleaning is even necessary, but in most cases, we have found that it is. In addition to removing surface stains, the deep-seating allergens and dust mites in your carpet can only be removed by a deep cleaning method, but there are precautions to take before hiring a local company or even doing it yourself.

Now, with regular maintenance, you may be able to avoid getting your carpets cleaned altogether—as long as you quickly address and clean up stains, vacuum regularly, and use natural cleaning agents as needed. This is especially true if you have minimal carpeting in your home and use mats at your entryway and other tools to help prevent dust and dirt from being tracked in.

However, especially for people with children and pets, stains and lots of tracks are hard to avoid and it can be helpful to have your carpets cleaned once or twice a year. Also, keep in mind that many carpet manufactures will require you to do so to maintain your warranty—so check your manual before deciding to completely ditch carpet cleaners all together. After all, we're going to cover some safe solutions for you because being eco-friendly does not equate to skimping on quality.

Precautions: Babies & Pets

Before we get into the specific types of carpet cleaning methods and how they can affect your home, here is a general overview that will convince you (if you still need convincing) on why you should be careful about what products you apply to your carpet.

Some carpet cleaning solutions used by carpet cleaning companies—especially spot removers—may be particularly dangerous, since they contain chemical solvents like those used by dry cleaners. These compounds dissolve dirt without soap and water, but give off strong odors. Other potentially problematic ingredients in carpet cleaning solutions include other compounds, which produce lots of fumes (such as formaldehyde), acids, pesticides, disinfectants, lye (sodium hydroxide), artificial fragrances, and many others.

During application and while drying, the chemicals in carpet cleaners and guards evaporate and may concentrate in the atmosphere, causing indoor air pollution. This is more likely if the space is not well ventilated, the weather is hot and humid, or the area is damp.



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Some carpet shampoos used by carpet cleaners usually leave a sticky residue on carpet fibers. The residue is hard to see or feel—though it can make carpets feel rougher and you may be able to smell it. The residue tends to attract and latch onto dirt, but children, who crawl and play on carpets, can inhale these residues and get them in their hands, which often go into their mouths.

Dry shampoos, powders, and foams (this sort of carpet cleaning process is usually referred to as bonnet cleaning or encapsulation cleaning) may also linger on carpet fibers. These products generally contain solvents and detergents that must be applied for a particular period of time, and then vacuumed to remove the cleaning product. A residue may be left behind or the item may sink deep enough into carpets to prevent them from being pulled out by the vacuum cleaner.

Lastly, powders and dusts are easily inhaled and may irritate airways and cause asthma attacks. In fact, anti-dust-mite carpet treatments sometimes contain tannic acid or benzyl benzoate, both of which are skin, eye, and respiratory irritants. Deodorizing powders frequently contain scents that irritate asthmatic lungs as well.

As you can see, having your carpets cleaned isn't as simple as you may have once believed. With all of the research coming out revealing the everyday dangers and toxins all around our homes, it's important that parents especially pay close attention to what their pets and kids will inevitably be breathing in, touching, and crawling on.

However, as scary as some of these findings may be, hopefully this guide will clear up the main threats and assist you in finding a safe, eco-friendly solution for your home's flooring.

PROFESSIONAL CARPET CLEANING METHODS

When it comes to having a clean home, carpets are one of the main elements that will attract your attention. After all, whether you can tell or not, carpets hold a huge amount of dirt, allergens and bacteria.

When you realize that your carpets need to be cleaned, like most people, you may be tempted to reach out to a professional company or perhaps rent a machine to complete the job yourself. However, as you'll soon learn, the methods used by a lot of professional carpet cleaners can leave behind a great deal of residue and harmful chemicals.

Unlike your clothes, which you can put through the rinse cycle to remove the detergent, your carpet will undoubtedly have some of the



cleaning compounds left on it—even after wet-vacuuming up the solution. Depending on the methods used to clean your carpets, this residue can cause skin and lung irritation for you, your family, and your pets.

Steam Cleaning

Steam cleaning, or “hot water extraction”, is often advertised as an environmentally friendly and safe option for having your carpets cleaned, however, if you look past all the marketing and do a bit of research, you’ll begin to discover some issues with this method if it is not done properly.

The first problem is that a lot of moisture can be left in the carpet if not extracted thoroughly, which can lead to over-saturation, dry rot and even mildew. Obviously, these things will negatively affect the healthiness of your home. For example, to clean a 1,500 square foot home, it takes about 6 gallons of water with a conservative estimate. It could take significantly more than that if the carpet cleaners have to do multiple passes or have equipment that disperses more water.

Additionally, due to the amount of water used, it can take far too much time to dry your floors after having them steam cleaned. Multiple passes are, in fact, required to get high-quality results and every pass builds up more and more water in your floors. Your floor may not even be dry to the touch for 8-24 hours, and during this time, water could be soaking deeper through your carpet and into the padding below your carpet.

If all of this wasn’t enough, field sampling has shown that steam cleaning can contaminate your carpet even further. If the water used in this method is not brought up to a high enough temperature, the resulting warm water can be the perfect breeding ground for fungus and bacteria, and hot water extraction can cause up to a 150% increase in

microbial content growth. This can have a direct negative impact of the health of you and your family.

Finally, hot water extraction can indeed cause long-term damage to your carpet and home itself. Over-saturating the carpet will degrade the backing overtime, which leads to raveling, dry rotting, and even the carpet separating from the backing.

THE SUPERIOR METHOD

Compared to the traditional steam cleaning method just explained, the superior method would be a non-toxic, low-moisture and high temperature steam cleaning protocol. This method of cleaning still allows homeowners to benefit from the germ killing effects of the steam cleaner's heat without leaving behind so much moisture that bacteria will be allowed to grow back. By employing a low-moisture method, hardly any water is left behind. Only enough to properly clean the carpets is used, which maximizes the cleansing and germ killing effects of the steam while reducing leftover moisture. The water left by traditional, high-moisture methods would inevitably lead to bacteria build up again and deterioration of the carpet itself, which is one of the things that makes low-moisture steam cleaning better.

Additionally, the superior steam cleaning method uses non-toxic products only, meaning there is no risk of chemicals being engrained into the carpet. Instead, natural products are used that employ various plant-based and organic cleansers to thoroughly and deeply clean the carpets. These products are powerful, but harmless to pets, children, and every other member of the family. While the drying process will remove as much of the leftover product as possible, it will not be harmful to the carpets or the home's inhabitants in any way even if a minuscule amount stays behind on the carpet. Being all natural, it's also a better choice for the environment as a whole and this cleaning method will not put any sort of chemicals into the water like other dangerous, toxic, unnatural products would.

The Encapsulation (Powder) Method

Countless products are available direct to consumers marketing for cleaning up and deodorizing carpets with ease. At the top of this list are powders which are sprinkled onto carpets in all kinds of scents and often allowed to soak in for an allotted period of time before being vacuumed up. Professional carpet cleaning companies also offer such a service, but it comes at a cost.

Healthy Child, an organization dedicated to stopping children from coming into contact with harmful chemicals, has clarified that these carpet powders are typically used inappropriately. While many people are tempted to let them sit in, they should be vacuumed up immediately to minimize risk. But, even if you follow that rule, powdery residue can still be left behind, engrained in your carpet.

Some of the chemicals contained in some of these powdered cleaners include formaldehyde, sodium hydroxide, and pesticides. While there are some safe powders out there, you will need to carefully research any item you consider and scan the contents list to check for chemicals.

Finally, powders often contain scents that can be irritating to children and pets. They can even trigger allergies and chronic respiratory conditions. So, always read the label and remember that not needing to use a powder at all is a better option. With regular upkeep and maintenance, powders really aren't necessary.

THE SUPERIOR METHOD

These powders used in the encapsulation method can contain harsh chemicals. While many homeowners might feel like they have nowhere else to turn and end up using these harsh products anyway, there is a far superior method that will get deep into the carpet fibers without leaving behind any chemicals or harmful products. Unlike the powders just described that will cause irritation to pets and children when they run and play on the carpet, a non-toxic and low-moisture steam cleaning protocol will leave behind a minimal amount of cleaner and what is left behind will be made of completely natural ingredients that will not harm anything (except germs and bacteria!).

This superior method doesn't employ a lot of water, but it still uses a high amount of heat to help kill off any germs or bacteria living inside your carpet. The low-moisture method provides a deeper clean than any surface powdering will, but the all natural and chemical-free cleansers used will not leave toxic powders engrained inside your carpets fibers. Instead, most of the cleaner will be used up in the cleansing process. This method won't be harmful to anyone in your household, not even your pets! Another thing that makes this method superior to the powder method is that it truly is a deep clean. The powder method might help remove surface odors, but this cleansing method will leave your entire home feeling and smelling fresher once the process is complete. There is also no worry about stirring up harmful powders or irritants while vacuuming later on as nothing harmful will even be used.

Bonnet Cleaning Method (Dry Cleaning)

Just like when you have your clothes dry cleaned and they are deodorized using chemicals, the same chemicals will be applied to your carpet when having them dry cleaned. The ultimate result is that some of these chemicals will be left behind long after your carpet cleaners have left, and these chemicals can have a harmful effect on you, your family, and your pets.

While dry carpet cleaning can be misconstrued as a “clean and green” option for cleaning your home’s carpet, it’s actually quite the opposite. The unfortunate thing is that most marketing campaigns for this service promise a “no residue cleaning agent” will be used, however, they define residue as the soapy residue left behind from shampooing agents. While there may not be any soapy residue left after dry cleaning your carpets, there will certainly be some product remaining.

The reason this method is often considered “green” is that they do not use water when cleaning. However, they do use chemical agents like perchloroethylene and naphthalene. The former is often shortened to just “perc” and it is known to have damaging effects on the human body when vapors are inhaled.

On the other hand, naphthalene can have harmful effects on your nervous system. As many studies have revealed, the fumes emanating from this chemical can result in cancer, live damage, loss of appetite, dizziness, disorientation, nausea, and sleeplessness. So, if you end up choosing this method anyway, make sure that your home is well ventilated.

Finally, aside from how toxic these chemicals are, one of the other disadvantages is the fact that they do not use any water at all. The “no-residue solutions” they use are unable to thoroughly clean your carpets and get into the deep fibers. As a result, you will only be paying

for a surface clean (which is a “pro” since these chemicals shouldn’t be left inside your carpet anyway!).

THE SUPERIOR METHOD

Dry cleaning is a pretty good option for clothing that is too delicate to be thrown into your washer. But, just because this method works well for your clothes doesn’t make it a good choice for your carpets. The difference between dry cleaning your clothes and dry cleaning your home’s floors is that your clothes have two sides--both of which are exposed to fresh air. That means that, when the dry cleaning chemicals are applied to your garments, they are able to air out more easily. Your clothing is also thinner than your carpets and the products used to dry clean clothing aren’t as powerful (or harmful) as those used to clean carpets. After all, your clothes don’t harbor that much bacteria as they are frequently cleaned and offer a much different environment than your home’s floors.

So, while dry cleaning might be the best solution for many of your favorite items inside your closet, it’s not a good option when it comes to the one-side exposed carpets inside your home. Carpets will not be aired out or cleaned as often as your clothes, and the harmful chemicals employed in the carpet dry cleaning process are by no means “green”. Instead, you should opt for a low-moisture and non-toxic steam cleaning protocol that will not leave behind any sort of toxic residue. While this method does use a bit of water, it uses a minimal amount--only enough to get the cleanser deep into the carpet fibers to kill bacteria and germs. The result will be a deeper, safer clean for your entire carpet.

Shampooing Method

Shampooing your carpet seems like a classic way to get them clean and fresh again, however, most professional carpet shampoos basically boil down to a toxic soup full of chemicals, some of which include carcinogens (cancer-causing ingredients).

When applied to your carpet, these shampoos are made to soak deep down into your carpet's fibers for a true deep clean, however, it is much easier to let a shampoo soak in than it is to remove it. Even with the highest suction power wet vac out there, inevitably, some components are going to be left behind, not to mention that this method shares similar issues to the steam cleaning method in that there is no way to suck up all the water.

Your carpet will take hours to dry and, during that time, fungus and bacteria have the perfect environment to return to your carpets before you even have the chance to enjoy the new clean environment you just waited on for so long.

THE SUPERIOR METHOD

If you want to get an idea of how much residue can be left behind in your carpets after applying a shampoo, spend about five minutes generously lathering up your hair next time you're in the shower and about one minute gently rinsing the top layer. The soapy residue that's left behind will open your eyes to how much of those chemical products are likely being soaked up by your carpet and not being properly rinsed out.

Since carpets only have one side exposed, rinsing them is a tricky process. Generally, if you let anything "soak in", you're not going to be able to get it all out. And, applying more water will only make the problem worse. The superior method uses less water than traditional carpet cleaning solutions, and it also accepts that a bit of residue should be expected to be left behind.

Rather than overusing the shampoo like many carpet cleaners will, a low-moisture, non-toxic steam cleaner will apply just enough all-natural cleaning product to your home's carpets. Using a little water but a lot of heat, bacteria and germs will quickly be killed, but the low amount of moisture will allow your carpets to dry quickly so you don't have to worry about fungus re-growing during the multi-hour drying process required by other methods. Instead, you'll be enjoying your clean carpets in just a few hours without any worries about toxic chemical residue.

Renting A Carpet Cleaner

Renting a carpet cleaner from your local store appears like it would have many benefits. After all, it will allow you to get a professional level clean at a fraction of the cost. However, you need to keep in mind all of the issues mentioned before with the various carpet cleaning methods.

First, the product you choose to shampoo your carpet with needs to be chemical free and truly safe because you're going to have some of it left in your carpet. You also need to make sure that you follow all directions for how long to leave it on your carpet. Now, keep in mind that a product that needs to be immediately removed will only give you a surface clean.

If you decide to go with this method, you also need to consider disposal methods for the dirty water. Pouring it right down the drain means these chemicals will be harming the environment and certain chemicals are not filtered out by the city's treatment center. That means the effects are really two-fold.

Finally, keep in mind the real issue with most carpet cleaning methods: water is going to be left behind. In the many hours your carpet takes to dry, that water is going to be soaking into your carpet's backing and encouraging the growth of bacteria and microbial content. Those things will only make your carpet even more unhealthy, even if the surface appears to be cleaner.

THE SUPERIOR METHOD

Water seems like the perfect solution for cleaning just about anything, but when it comes to your carpets, it's practically your enemy. Apply a little bit of water to your carpets to clean the surface is perfect for spot cleaning and small jobs as long as you're able to soak it all up quickly so it doesn't allow more fungus and bacteria to grow, but the problem with renting your own carpet cleaner is that your carpets can take hours--or even an entire night--to dry. For highly soiled carpets, you might have to do multiple passes, each one putting more and more water into your carpet. That means a higher dry time, giving fungus more time to grow. Therefore, the method you choose should use significantly less water.

However, it's impossible to properly clean carpets past the surface by using no water at all, which is why there's a solution somewhere in between. That solution is a low-moisture, non-toxic steam cleaning protocol. By using steam, the heat helps to kill the germs and bacteria all the way down into your carpet's deepest fibers, but without soaking your carpets all the way through. That means it will dry quicker without allowing bacteria time to grow. Meanwhile, all natural products aid the cleansing process without leaving any sort of harmful chemical residue behind, making carpets safe for children and pets. The result: a better, safer clean.

Purchasing A Commercial Grade Cleaner

Finally, let's discuss purchasing a commercial grade carpet cleaner, like a Bissell. This is a very popular option, especially for families with pets and/or young children who are regularly having to clean up stains and who want to keep dust and allergens out of their home.

Like the methods mentioned before, you need to be mindful of the actual cleaning product you are using as this is what will stick around the longest and have the biggest effect on the health of your carpet. Look for a truly clean, environmentally friendly product that does not utilize chemical cleaning agents. Typically it will have vinegar or another natural germ killer and deodorizer in it.

Next, read reviews and consider how much water must be applied for this carpet cleaner to work properly. You will want a cleaner that uses as little water as possible, but keep in mind that no water means you're really just cleaning the carpet's surface. Also consider how many passes are recommended as each pass will add to the water build up. If you were going to use this method, the most effective way would be to let your carpet fully dry in between passes—which would take both a lot of vacuuming and waiting. However, it will help prevent bacteria re-growth following your carpet cleaning.

Here are some final DIY tips:

- Be sure that the cleaning equipment, number of passes, and amount of water will allow the carpet to dry within 6 to 12 hours to help minimize potential damage and bacteria growth.
- Use fans and/or a dehumidifier to expedite drying time.
- Choose a cleaning solution with a pH of 10 or less. Wet-vac multiple times to remove as much solution as you can.

THE SUPERIOR METHOD

Buying a commercial grade carpet cleaner has its perks. First of all, you'll be able to clean your carpets more frequently, however these machines don't have enough suction power to remove all the moisture they put into your carpet, so make sure you spend extra time taking multiple passes while just using the suction to try and get as much moisture out of the carpet as possible. Most carpet cleaning machines use too much water and don't have enough extraction power, and they also require you to use store bought carpet cleaning products--most of which contain many different harmful chemicals.

Rather than spending the time and money cleaning your carpets yourself with a less-than-ideal method, the superior choice would be to contact a professional company with the right equipment for the job. Hiring a company that combines low-moisture, non-toxic and high heat steam carpet cleaning will end up saving you a lot of time and money in the long run and it will ensure you get the safest, highest quality results by employing a team of experts.

Companies have access to products that consumers don't, and if you hire a company that offers completely non-toxic methods, you will be able to enjoy professionally cleaned carpets without any worry. A low-moisture steam cleaning protocol will mean a quicker dry time than an at-home carpet cleaning system would allow, and a professional job means reduced chances of bacteria regrowth and hidden, harmful ingredients inside the products. The result will mean a safe, healthier, and happier home.

Comparison Table

COMPARE	TECHNICARE CARPET CLEANING AND MORE	CHEM-DRY	STANLEY STEEMER	COIT	ZEROZEZ
Method	Technicare uses a low-moisture, non-toxic, high heat steam cleaning protocol to kill germs and allow the carpets to dry quickly to prevent the re-growth of fungus and bacteria.	Chem-Dry employs a “dry cleaning” process that uses less water than traditional steam cleaning. They say their primary cleaner, The Natural, does not contain harsh chemicals.	Stanley Steemer uses hot water extraction (traditional steam cleaning). This method uses a lot of water, and they advertise a dry time of “8-24 hours” in which bacteria can easily grow back.	Coit advertises that they use a truck-mounted carpet cleaning system that cleans your carpets and employs water and shampoo.	Zerorez advertises itself as a green carpet cleaner. They use water as part of a “patented high-pressure, controlled spray system” to clean your carpets.
Non-toxic?	Yes	Yes	Some	Not advertised	Not advertised
Pet safe?	Yes	Advertised	Some	Not advertised	Not advertised
Local?	Locally Owned	Franchise	Franchise	Franchise	Franchise
Service Areas	Columbus, OH Louisville, KY Atlanta, GA	Across the World	Across the USA	Across the USA	Southern USA
BBB Rating	A+ (all locations)	C to A (varies by location)	F to A (varies by location)	B- to A (varies by location)	C to A (varies by location)
Google Reviews	★★★★★ 5.0 (all locations)	★☆☆☆☆ ★★★★★ 1.0 to 4.8 (varies by locations)	★★★★☆ ★★★★★ 3.9 to 4.3 (varies by locations)	★★★★☆ ★★★★★ 3.9 to 4.1 (varies by locations)	★★★★☆ ★★★★★ 3.9 to 4.1 (varies by locations)
Facebook Reviews	4.9 (all locations)	3.6 (corporate page)	Not Available	4.3 to 4.8 (varies by locations)	4.4 (corporate page)

ARE THE COMPARISON RESULTS CLEAR?

Every homeowner wants their house to be a comforting, safe, and healthy environment for their friends and family. And, while carpeting can make your home feel extra cozy year-round, it can also be the biggest harbinger of germs and bacteria that can irritate you, your children, and your pets while provoking allergies and asthma. Worse yet, anyone looking for a carpet cleaner in their area can easily be misled by schemes and claims of “green cleaning” that are hardly safe or healthy.

After doing research on carpet cleaning reviews we found Technicare Carpet Cleaning to be the highest rated pet-friendly carpet cleaner on the market. Serving multiple areas around Atlanta Georgia, Columbus Ohio and Louisville Kentucky, the company was founded in 1993 and according to Angie’s List have been offering outstanding service ever since. Today, according to their reviews, they continue to offer the best customer service and highest quality carpet cleaning services available. The main selling point of Technicare Carpet Cleaning is not great marketing, however, it’s the fact that they use the best and safest methods to get the job done right.

When comparing Technicare Carpet Cleaning to other carpet cleaners, they have some of the shortest drying times available, making their unique double extraction method quicker, more convenient, and healthier. By employing a low amount of moisture, Technicare Carpet Cleaning’s method is able to kill germs and bacteria deep inside carpet by using a high amount of heat. The low-moisture method ensures that carpets will dry quickly, without the worry of bacteria or fungus growing in an overly saturated wet environment that’s often left behind by other inferior methods.

Additionally, we found the non-toxic and natural cleaning products Technicare Carpet Cleaning uses in their cleaning process are 100% safe for pets and children. The completely natural, non-toxic solutions used in Technicare’s cleaning methods leaves no harmful residue behind. That means you don’t have to worry about stopping your pets or children from playing on the floor.

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This worry-free solution makes for the best results in the industry, and the safest. Rather than worrying about the chemicals and high amounts of water that other cleaners are putting into your floors, Technicare Carpet Cleaning will leave homeowners confident that their carpets are safe, clean, and healthy. Technicare Carpet Cleaning does not seem to compromise quality carpet cleaning for safety, either. You will get great results using industry-leading, truly green methods that can remove pet stains and odors that other methods would leave behind.

According to reviews, Technicare Carpet Cleaning can get out just about any stubborn problem spot and make your carpets like new again including dander, odor, oily spots, urine stains, or just about anything else. In addition to the non-toxic, low-moisture steam cleaning protocol they follow, Technicare Carpet Cleaning can also do a pre-treatment and customize your carpet treatment as needed so that you get the absolute best results. And, no matter how much cleaning your carpets require, you can trust that Technicare Carpet Cleaning will always use the safest, healthiest methods on the market today.

All of this gives you peace of mind knowing that when Technicare Carpet Cleaning's crew leaves your home, your carpets will truly be clean, healthy, and ready for playtime without any worry of dangerous toxins or chemicals being left behind. Your floors will dry quickly, and they will look fantastic for you and your family to enjoy.

WHAT TO DO IN BETWEEN PROFESSIONAL CARPET CLEANING?

Carpet stains are inevitable. It seems like whatever isn't supposed to end up on your pristine carpeting always does at some point, which is why knowing how to clean up stains is essential to keeping your home a fresh, good looking, and healthy place to be.

DIY Tips For Stain Cleaning

Before we get into any particular type of stain, let's go over some basic tips. First, you will want to immediately blot (not scrub) the stain to get as much of the liquid up as possible before it has time to sink in. Preferably, use a very absorbent cloth or rag to do so.



Scrubbing the carpet means you risk ruining the carpet fibers or letting the spill soak right through to the carpet's backing.

Always spot test before applying any cleaner to your rug or carpet to prevent a disastrous discoloration (or, in the case of wool, disintegrate).

There are many different types of stains you'll run across in your daily life.

WATER-SOLUBLE STAINS

- Alcoholic Beverages
- Berries
- Colas
- Excrement
- Food dyes
- Gravy
- Ice cream
- Jelly
- Milk
- Mud
- Washable ink
- Wet paint
- Latex paint

To clean a water soluble stain, simple mix ¼ teaspoon of non-bleach detergent or white vinegar with 32 ounces of water.

SPECIAL WATER-SOLUBLE STAINS

- Blood
- Chocolate
- Coffee
- Mustard
- Tea
- Vomit
- Wine

For these, try 1 tablespoon of ammonia mixed with a cup of water. But, do not use this on a wool or wool-blend carpet. Instead, use mild detergent and water.

You can also try one part chlorine bleach to five parts water on solution-dyed carpets, like polypropylene.

FAT, OIL, AND WAX

To begin cleaning a stain of fat, oil, or wax, start by placing a clean paper towel over the carpet. Get your iron and put it on the warm setting, then place over the paper towel. The stain should come off the carpet and stick to the towel.

OTHER STAINS

- For glue, moisten a cotton ball or soft cloth with rubbing alcohol and press down on the area. Once it is thoroughly wet, gently wipe off. Repeat until clean.
- For wax and gum, use ice to freeze it then shatter it with a blunt object, like a metal spoon. Vacuum up before the stain softens again, then blot the carpet with a towel.
- For nail polish, blot the area with a rag dipped in nail polish remover.
- For urine, absorb as much as possible and then blot with a damp, cool cloth. Spray or blot with a solution of: one part white vinegar to one part water. Next, apply a solution of ½ teaspoon of clear, mild, non-bleach detergent mixed with 32 ounces of water. Rinse, then blot dry.

PET STAINS

As in the last section, make sure to follow these tips:

- Blot the stain, don't rub it or scrub it.
- Avoid scrubbing in general to prevent degrading the carpet fibers or rubbing the stain in more.
- Spot test all cleaners prior to use

POTTY SPOTS

If your pet has urinated on the carpet, there is one sure-fire remedy to clean it up. Begin by using old vinegar and baking soda. Pour enough vinegar to soak the stain, and then add a small amount of the baking soda. Make sure to do it in this order and expect to hear a crackling sound to know that it is deodorizing and cleaning. Let dry for a day or two, then sweep or vacuum it up. Cover with a bowl or plate to avoid the baking soda from being tracked around your home.

This also works on some other stains.

VOMIT

Inevitably, your pet will get sick one day and cleaning it up can be a real hassle. As we mentioned in the previous section, most vomit stains can be cleaned using 1 tablespoon of ammonia mixed with a cup of water.



But, do not use this on a wool or wool-blend carpet. Instead, use mild detergent and water.

If all else fails, mix a solution of ½ cup hydrogen peroxide with a teaspoon of liquid detergent. Sprinkle baking soda onto the area and then pour on the solution. Gentle blot and let sit for 10 minutes or longer (especially if the stain is older). Use a towel to get up as much liquid as possible, and then vacuum the area.

TIPS FOR KEEPING YOUR CARPET CLEAN AROUND PETS

- **MIND THEIR PAWS:** Much of the dirt and grime that gets transferred to the house from a pet stems from their paws. Keep those paws clean to limit the harm to high traffic pet regions.
- **KEEP A TOWEL NEAR THE DOOR AND GENTLY WIPE YOUR PET'S PAWS** whenever they come in. A spray bottle of water can also be useful for all those times your pet gets a little extra dirty (or on rainy days).
- **AREA RUGS AND RUNNERS** may add a little pizzazz to a room, but they could also work as a dirt catcher. Putting area rugs or runners in high traffic pet places can limit the harm to the real carpet that can't be easily picked up or replaced. You may also be able to strategically put the rugs so that the vast majority of the time the pet is on the rugs, not the carpet.
- **KEEP YOUR PET GROOMED AND CLEAN** and you'll see that there's less mess on the, which means less transfers to the carpet. Maintaining your dog's hair also restricts the amount of pet hair that will find its way to your carpet.
- **VACUUM OFTEN** to prevent hair and grime buildup.
- **DON'T FORGET TO VACUUM THE FURNITURE ALSO.** Even if the pet doesn't get on the furniture, dirt and hair can make their way

into the furniture by air or vibration. Thus, when vacuuming, vacuum both the ground and use an extension tool on drapes and furniture.

- **BE READY**, because even the most well-trained pet could have an accident from time to time. Using a simple pet stain remover available or hand held steam cleaner can do wonders. Make certain to get any solids removed as fast as possible and dry the area thoroughly. The crucial to pet stains it to treat them whenever possible.
- **BAKING SODA** may be used on pet stains to help remove odor. Baking soda does NOT, however, take the place of a deep clean method.
- **IF YOU HAVE AN UNRULY PET OR PUPPY, CONSIDER CONFINING THEM** to regions of the home without carpeting. If the area isn't big enough for all day confinement, use the region at night or when the pet gets less attention.
- **PET FOOD COMES IN A NUMBER OF FORMS.** However, many foods have artificial colors included. These colors can stain carpet and trigger for a messy cleanup should your pet have an accident. Instead, buy food without additional coloring for less mess (and this will also benefit your dog's health!).
- **EVEN WITH THE UTMOST OF CARE AND ATTENTION**, pets can cause your carpeting to look worn and dirty. The Rug and Carpet Institute indicates that pet owners should get their carpet cleaning at least once annually, or even more if they have several pets or often experience accidents.
- **CARPET CLEANING PROFESSIONALS** may also be called, especially for tough pet stains or spot cleaning and treatment of heavily used area rugs.

TIPS FOR MAINTAINING A HEALTHY FLOOR

As we hinted to in an earlier section, if you regularly and properly maintain your carpet, you shouldn't have to worry about having them cleaned too often. There are some basic steps to take to keep your carpets clean and healthy. And, if you follow these steps regularly and use the stain removal tips from the previous section, you shouldn't have too much to worry about.

- **VACUUM YOUR CARPETS ON A REGULAR BASIS.** In areas with heavy traffic, vacuum every other day. At minimum, vacuum once a week to remove dust and debris that can shorten your carpet's lifespan.
- **TAKE YOUR TIME TO GET ALL THE NOOKS AND CRANNIES OF YOUR FLOOR** when you do go to vacuum. Make several passes, using both a crisscross and overlapping pattern so you get everywhere. Go slowly and smoothly so your vacuum can work most effectively.
- **TO NEUTRALIZE ANY ODORS,** sprinkle on baking soda and let stand for around 10-15 minutes before you vacuum it up.
- **IF YOU CHOOSE TO USE A CARPET CLEANING SOLUTION,** make sure to test it in a hidden area and always make sure it does not contain harmful chemicals.
- **TO HELP PREVENT OUTSIDE DIRT AND BACTERIA** from being tracked in, put entry rugs at your front door and entryways and keep them clean.
- **ENCOURAGE FAMILY MEMBERS TO REMOVE SHOES** at the door. Pesticides, pollutants and dirt come inside on shoes and are tracked onto carpets. If going shoeless is not acceptable to family members, suggest that they wear house shoes (that do not go outside).

Having a clean carpet is about more than your rugs simply looking clean. Inside, the carpet fibers can easily trap dust and dirt that degrades your home's air quality and is dangerous for pets and children to be around. That's why having "healthy carpets" is so important.

**NOW, LET'S GET MORE IN-DEPTH
WITH THESE TIPS, AS CLEANING GOES
BEYOND SIMPLY USING A VACUUM.**

Get A HEPA Vacuum

HEPA, or "High-Efficiency Particulate Air" vacuums differ from traditional vacuums in that they contain filters that are effective at trapping extremely little, micro-sized particles. A true HEPA filter can trap 99.97 percent of all airborne particles larger than 0.3 microns. To illustrate how small this is, a human red blood cell is usually between 6 and 8 microns wide.

So, why do HEPA vacuums need to be used for cleaning? As an example, airborne lead dust particles are around 2 or 3 microns in size and settled dust may be anything bigger than this. While a household vacuum could pick up paint chips, the average household vacuum will release particles smaller than 50 microns, which means that the vast majority of the smallest and most easily spread particles are being blown back into the air.

QUESTION:

If I use a HEPA vacuum to clean a surface, does that mean it is free of lead dust? **The answer:** Yes, a HEPA vacuum will pick up loose dust from surfaces.

QUESTION:

Are all HEPA vacuums the same? **The answer:** Well, vacuum manufacturers are not required to test their vacuums for particle emissions so the quality and filtration Capability of HEPA vacuums may vary greatly.

SO, WHAT ARE A FEW THINGS TO CONSIDER WHEN PURCHASING A HEPA VACUUM?

- **CONSIDER WHICH SORT OF CLEANING** you are using the vacuum cleaner for. Normally a good canister style vacuum will suffice for most household cleaning jobs while a more industrial design vacuum cleaner may be required for cleaning up after renovation work. Consider a power head for the canister vacuum if cleaning carpets.
- **UPRIGHT VACUUMS** tend to be less well constructed, leak more exhaust air, and are harder to use for cleaning vertical surfaces.
- **LOOK FOR A VACUUM USING PRE-FILTER STAGES** before the primary HEPA filter. Pre-filters in a vacuum will help prevent dirt from directly impacting and clogging the HEPA filter, which is generally expensive to replace.
- **CHECK FOR GASKETS IN THE VACUUM CASING** that prevent air leakage, which may bypass the filters. While many manufacturers will talk about how great their HEPA filtration is, a vacuum cleaner that lets air leak out before it gets to the filter is not very effective.
- **LOOK FOR A VACUUM WITH THE HEPA FILTER AFTER THE MOTOR.** If the engine is after the filter, then the engine will emit carbon particles from the brushes in the motor.
 - 1. USING BAGS:** These tend to not seal very tightly and release lots of dust when emptied.

2. ENSURE VACUUM WANDS HAVE A SUCTION CONTROL or air vent to control the strength of suction. This is very useful when vacuuming.

3. AVOID VACUUMS USING “WATER FILTRATION” since they’re not a replacement for HEPA filtration.

4. WHEN USING A GOOD QUALITY HEPA VACUUM, you shouldn’t be able to see or smell dust although most scents will not be stopped by a HEPA filter.

Cleaning Without Chemicals

- **HOMEMADE VINEGAR-BASED CLEANER:** You knew it was just a matter of time before white vinegar showed up on the list, right? White distilled vinegar is a key weapon to have in the pantry.
- **A SIMPLE CARPET-CLEANING POWDER** composed of a half a cup of baking soda with 10 drops of your favorite essential oil will immediately deodorize your carpet. Sprinkle it on the carpet and leave for at least half an hour, or more if possible, then vacuum up nicely. You may also use this procedure on the mats in your car.
- **CARPET-CLEANING MACHINE:** You can run your vacuum within precisely the identical spot in four distinct directions, or you may spot clean like mad. For those who have a house which is mostly carpeted, and you’ve got pets and children to clean up afterwards, buying a carpet-cleaning machine or a vacuum with deep-cleaning choices makes a good deal of sense. If you don’t have a high-traffic house, renting a carpet-cleaning machine can do just fine. Just don’t purchase the carpet cleaning liquid that’s typically encouraged by the machine instructions, rather, make a green one at home.

If all else fails, bring in a green professional. Sometimes you do not have enough time, or the willpower, to make your own homemade remedies and concoctions. You've already got enough on your own schedule, and learning to clean carpets is not high on your list of priorities.

Unfortunately, there are only a handful of professional carpet cleaners that use eco-friendly cleaning that's safe for children and pets. Make certain to do your homework about professionals which claim to be organic or chemical-free; a few, regrettably, use the terms loosely.

So when spot cleaning and routine vacuuming won't cut it, there are loads of options to responsibly deep clean your carpet. We'll cover some in the next section.

Tips For Keeping Your Rental Carpets Clean

Maintaining clean carpets may be one of the most stressful aspects of rental living. Not only are they among the most examined and fined amenities during move-out inspections, but they could also be easily worn and damaged through simple day-to-day living. Luckily, there are a few easy and inexpensive measures you can take to protect your carpets. Use these six tips for keeping your carpets clean and minimizing the chance of fines and stains.

DOCUMENT EXISTING ISSUES

Prior to moving in, make certain to note any existing stains, damage, or basic wear-and-tear on the carpeting. Make certain to examine the whole unit, including closets and storage nooks, and record what you find both in writing and in pictures. Beyond visible stains, if you suspect prior tenants had small children and/or pets, ask that the carpets be scrutinized with a black light for additional hard-to-see stains. This

move-in inspection is going to be the only proof of damages you didn't cause, so be as detailed and thorough as possible.

PROTECT HIGH-TRAFFIC AREAS

Accidents aside, general day-to-day living will cause observable wear-and-tear on carpeting. This is particularly true in high-traffic areas like entryways, hallways, and common thoroughfares throughout the rental. Thankfully, you can control how worn these areas become. First, reduce the amount of dirt that is brought in by creating the whole place a shoe-free zone. Maintain a shoe organizer by the front door for the entire household, and ask guests to remove their shoes prior to entering as well. Also, think about laying down inexpensive mats or runners in the high-traffic places.

Example situations include painting the room (or doing any other messy DIY projects), parties, and any spaces dedicated to kid and/or pet drama. For DIY projects, use inexpensive plastic tarps and decent tape to protect every part of exposed carpet. Even if you are a tidy painter, it is ideal to protect against accidental spills or rogue splatters because paint is quite tricky to remove from carpeting. For parties and play spaces, consider laying down large area rugs over the wall-to-wall carpet. These rugs can be pricey though, so search thrift stores, online retail sites, and home improvement store sales for inexpensive options that won't bust your budget.

PRACTICE GOOD CARPET MAINTENANCE

One of the keys to keeping carpets clean and looking good at all times is to practice routine maintenance. Stock your flat with some basic carpet-cleaning supplies and set (and stick to) a fantastic cleaning routine. At a minimum, keep carpet-specific spot remover, rags, and a fantastic vacuum on hand. If the circumstance and budget permit, an at-home steam cleaner and carpet deodorizer are valuable additions.

Spot treat stains when they occur with carpet-specific goods, and steam clean at least annually to eliminate hard-to-remove stains and smells.

PROFESSIONALLY CLEANING

Many rental agencies will require a professional carpet cleaning prior to vacating the unit. However, even with professional supplies and equipment, some problems are impossible to remove if they have been there for some time. If you plan to stay in your rental for more than a year, consider having an annual professional cleaning to get out stubborn stains and lessen the appearance of general wear-and-tear. If a professional cleaning is not in the budget, rent a professional-grade steamer to do the job yourself for a fraction of the price!