

Those stains weren't there before dry cleaning! What's going on?



You don't remember seeing a stain before you took that garment to the cleaner. Or before you put it away in your closet.

It couldn't have been there. You'd have surely seen it. Right?

The more likely scenario is that **the stain was there but it just wasn't visible** when you took it to the cleaner or when you put it away in your closet.

The transformation from an invisible to a visible stain can be best explained by 2 examples:

- Think about an apple. If an apple is cut in half and left on a plate, the oxygen in the air and/or heat causes the sugars in the apple to **caramelize and turn brown or yellow**.
- Think about any oily substance such as cooking oil or moisturizing cream. If you wash a blouse or shirt with an oil-based stain and then you hand iron that garment, the heat from the hand iron causes that oil stain to **oxidize and turn brown or yellow**.

How stains and spills can transform from invisible to visible at the dry cleaner

Many stains and spills are colorless when they first come into contact with your garment. Fact is, you may not have even been aware of the problem at the time the stain or spill occurred.

On the other hand, if you were aware that a stain or spill occurred and tried to blot the stain or spill with a napkin or towel, some residue of the stain or spill will always be left behind.

Although the garment looks clean and you might have only worn it for a few hours, you, nonetheless, decide to have it cleaned. So off to the cleaner it goes.

The dry cleaner then loads his dry cleaning machine and presses the magical start button. The garment then goes through the wash, extract and dry cycle. Unfortunately, when the garment is removed from the dry cleaning machine, the stain or spill has **transformed from an invisible to a visible stain**. In this case, the **heat** from the dry cleaning machine's dry cycle acted as a catalyst to highlight the stain.

Now, let's assume that, instead of asking the cleaner to clean the garment, you asked your cleaner for a press only. When the garment is pressed by machine or with a hand iron, the heat from the press or the hand iron **transforms the stain or spill from an invisible to a visible stain**. In this case, the **heat** from the pressing machine or hand iron acted as a catalyst to highlight the stain.

When a stain suddenly appears, it means that the stain has caramelized or oxidized. Heat, oxygen and time can caramelize or oxidize the stain.

A skilled stain removal technician can often remove a stain that appears to have "set".

How stains and spills can transform from invisible to visible in your closet

Many stains and spills are colorless when they first come into contact with your garment. Fact is, you may not have even been aware of the problem at the time the stain or spill occurred.

On the other hand, if you were aware that a stain or spill occurred and tried to blot the stain or spill with a napkin or a towel, some residue of the stain or spill will always be left behind.

As the garment looks clean and you only wore it for a few hours, you decide to hang it in your closet.

The problem is that, over a period of time, these stains and spills combine with oxygen in the air and/or heat and **transform from an invisible to a visible stain**.

So just because you couldn't see a stain or spill or you thought you'd removed all traces of the stain or spill through blotting, doesn't mean a stain or spill wasn't lurking in the fibers of your garment.

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Common stains and spills that transform from invisible to visible

Some common liquids that can transform from an invisible to a visible stain include:

- **Sugar stains** such as champagne and soft drinks.
- **Oil stains** such as linseed, peanut, coconut, soy bean and salad oils.
- **Tannin stains** such as liquor, tea, soft drinks and medicines.
- **Albumin stains** such as egg, milk, perspiration, blood and urine.
- **What can you do?**

The best way to prevent a hidden problem from popping out into the open is to

- inform your cleaner of the location and nature of the stain or spill.
- avoid putting garments into your closet that have water- and oil-based stains or spills.

A caveat is in order: If you do inform your cleaner about the stain or spill, there's a strong likelihood that the cleaner will not act on that information. That's because most cleaners don't have a skilled stain removal technician on premises. They might say they do, but in most cleaners, their "experienced dry cleaner" is merely someone who loads and unloads the dry cleaning machine.

If the stain or spill miraculously comes out **you're** in luck. And if it doesn't, well, that's your problem.

Many ordinary cleaners will actually tell you that **it's your fault**. After all, **you** were the one who created the stain or spill in the first place!

Go figure.



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RAVE FabriCARE, based in Scottsdale, Arizona, cares for fine garments, household textiles and accessories and serves clients in the USA and Canada and in other selected countries throughout the world. Stu is the author of various Position Papers, White Papers and Ebooks on these subjects, all of which are available from ravefabricare/downloads/free-stuff. He is an evangelist for true quality cleaning and is a contributor to and editor of True Quality Cleaning, RAVE FabriCARE's blog.



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