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## Stainless Steel Maintenance Guidelines

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Stainless steel, an alloy of iron that contains ten percent chromium, is a very resilient material used in a wide range of household and industrial products. It's resistant to [rust](#) and tarnish due to the chromium film on its surface. Not only is stainless steel used in household products, it's also used in wide variety of architectural structures on account of its strong resistance to corrosion that can be caused by changes in atmospheric conditions. What may appear to be rust is caused by iron particles on the surface of the stainless steel. Despite its name, stainless steel can, and does stain, and requires regular cleaning and maintenance.

The first thing to consider when you set out to clean stainless is *what not to do*. Some popular cleaning products will damage the finish on stainless steel, and even plain water can leave unsightly marks and spots if not used properly.

- DON'T use chlorine bleach or any product containing chloride.
- DON'T use oven cleaners.
- DON'T use [steel wool](#), steel brushes, or highly abrasive scrubbing pads—these can cause scratches or leave a residue of small particles that may rust.
- DON'T use abrasive cleansers on brushed stainless steel.
- DON'T clean a stainless steel surface unless it is cool to the touch.
- DON'T use gritty, dirty, or excessively hard water, as it can leave spots or brownish stains.

One of the best habits to adopt is to wipe down your unit on a regular basis with a damp, soapy washcloth at least once a week; rinse the washcloth with clean water and wipe again to remove any soap; then finish with a wipe of a dry terry towel.

Always wipe in the direction of the stainless steel "grain," starting at the top of the unit and working your way down towards the floor.

For heavier dirt and stains, use a *nylon* scrubbie, a mild detergent, and hot water. Be sure to rinse the surface and towel dry to prevent water spots or staining.

To remove really tough dirt and stains, make a paste of baking soda mixed with liquid dish soap and gently scrub with a *nylon* scrubbie or an old toothbrush. If some stains remain, use undiluted vinegar, again scrubbing gently with a soft brush. Be sure to rinse and towel dry.

You may want to buff your units periodically with a stainless steel polish, lemon oil, or a silicone-based spray to maintain a lustrous finish. Apply the polish in the direction of the grain with a lint-free cloth; buff and dry with another lint-free cloth.

There are numerous non-abrasive cleaners and polishes that are designed specifically for use on stainless steel. 3M professional grade, Bar Keeper's Friend, Cerama Bryte, Sprayway and Weiman. When in doubt, always test your cleaner on someplace hidden, like the back or sides, before moving on to the front or top.

