



# THE THREAD

Unraveling the Mysteries of Fibers, Fabrics and Floorcoverings

## OXYGENATED CLEANERS... Playing Russian Roulette With Spot Cleaners

Oxygenated cleaners have been around for at least thirty years but recently, this type of spot remover has been gaining popularity with consumers. Thanks to mass market advertising campaigns, awareness of this type of cleaner has increased dramatically. Before adding an oxygenated product to your shopping list, it's important to know how it works and whether it is safe for your fabrics.

### Oxygen Power

Oxygenated cleaners are powdered products based on an active ingredient called sodium percarbonate.

The cleaning power of the oxygenated cleaners is actually two-fold. First, the product is based on an alkaline (high-pH) chemistry. Alkaline products are well known for their effectiveness on a variety of stains and soiling.

The second type of cleaning effect, as the name suggests, comes from the action of oxygen.

Sodium percarbonate forms sodium carbonate and hydrogen peroxide when mixed

with water. The reactive oxygen in hydrogen peroxide makes the resulting solution a mild bleaching agent. Stronger versions of hydrogen peroxide are used to bleach hair (and other materials).

***No matter what type of spot remover you choose -- and no matter what it says on the label -- the need for careful pre-testing does not change.***

### One Size Fits All

A great selling point for any cleaning product is versatility. If a single product can clean everything from countertops to carpets, it can take the place of three or four more specialized products.

Hence, there is a tendency for manufacturers to push the boundaries and make claims that their products are suitable for use on almost any surface.

If your sofa fabric is "Herculon" or your carpet is "AstroTurf," oxygenated cleaners are probably very safe to use for spot removal. However, if your

fabrics are cotton, silk, wool, or rayon, consider the following information.

### Alkalinity Is Dangerous

Many fabrics, especially synthetics such as polyester and olefin, are safely cleaned using high-pH products, but the vast majority of high-end interior fabrics are made from natural fibers.

For the majority of these fabrics, highly alkaline cleaners such as the oxygenated type are not recommended. First, the alkalinity can damage the fibers themselves. More frequently, the alkalinity can cause dyes to bleed.

### The Bleaching Effect

In addition to possible alkalinity damage, there is also the problem of the oxygen "bleaching" effect. Oxygen bleaches are helpful in removing dye-type stains due to their ability to react with colored molecules. But what about the dyes which are used to color the fabric?

Though the concentration is relatively low, oxygen released by these products can cause

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colors to lighten. Even “white” fabrics or floor coverings can be lightened in spot-cleaned areas, creating lighter and darker “white” areas.

This problem can be intensified with misuse. Even though manufacturers specify how much of the product to use, consumers often think that more is better. In this case, adding a second scoop can intensify both the bleaching and the alkalinity, increasing the possibility of damage.

### **On The Bright Side**

As always, the experts of your local Fiber-Seal Service Center are just a phone call away when you need assistance with the care of fine interior textiles. We have developed safe and effective spotting agents that are being used in thousands of homes every day. These products are the perfect compliment to our superior protective treatments, used to help keep elegant interiors looking great year in and year out.

### **Need Help With Spotting Or Cleaning?**

Your local Fiber-Seal Service Center is ready to help and just a click away.



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