

# Tackling Your Laundry: Let's talk products!

Welcome to the ever changing world of laundry detergents, stain removal products, fabric softeners and dryer sheets. Some of today's choices can become overwhelming. Whatever the product choice, the information in this publication should help you keep your laundry room safe.

## Choosing the right laundry detergent

Laundry detergents come in many forms, each having its own benefits. Select the form that meets your specific need.

### General purpose detergents

Full-strength detergents can be used with many types of fabrics/textiles. These products include:

- High Efficiency (HE) detergents
- Ultra detergents
- Single-use detergents (pods)
- Fragrance or dye-free detergents
- Bar soap
- Combination detergents

### Light duty detergents

These detergents can be used when washing fabrics by hand or in your washing machine. They are used primarily for delicate fabrics, such as those requiring special care, or lightly-soiled items; ideal for hand washing baby clothes. These products include:

- Liquid Detergents
- Powdered Detergents



*There are three types of energy needed for good cleaning results:*  
**Chemical** — provided by detergents and laundry aids;  
**Thermal** — provided by the water temperature;  
**Mechanical** — provided by the machine agitation.

*All three need to be considered for best results!*

## Liquid, powders and enzyme detergents

Liquid detergents work at all temperatures and are easy to use for pretreating stains. Liquid detergents have an ingredient that helps soften hard water minerals.

Ground in dirt and clay are best lifted from soiled laundry with powder detergents using warm to hot water. Protein and oil-based stains are best removed using enzyme detergents. Presoaking is needed and the laundry must agitate 5 to 7 minutes before liquid bleach can be added. Adding bleach too soon stops the enzyme “action” of the detergent. Follow directions on detergent packages for the amount to use. Remember these are recommendations for an average load size. An average load is 5 to 7 pounds of laundry. If soil or load size increases, then more detergent may be needed.

## Fabric softeners

Fabric softeners can be used in the washer or in the dryer. Fabric softeners help reduce static cling and wrinkles, and may slightly reduce soiling. Liquid softeners are better at softening and should be diluted prior to adding to final rinse cycle. Dryer sheets are better at reducing static cling.

- Towels and diaper absorbency is reduced if an excessive amount of fabric softener is used.
- Fabric softeners may reduce the effectiveness of flame retardant finishes on children’s sleepwear.

## Read the Label



Garment care labels provide the manufacturer’s instruction for cleaning the garment. For the best cleaning performance, read and follow both garment care labels and product directions.

Understand your garment label. Care labels may feature symbols in addition to words. If you have questions, call the toll-free number listed on product labels to assure that it is the right product for the job.



## Common stain removal products

*It's no  
use  
crying  
over  
spilled  
milk,  
unless it  
stains  
your  
clothes!*  
—Unknown

Products for stain removal can usually be found in grocery, drug, general merchandise or hardware stores. Many commercial laundry products have proprietary formulas that are protected by patent rights and not available to the public. Ingredients listed on labels for safety purposes can help you decide if the product will be useful for the stain removal task you have. There is no miracle product that will remove all stains.

### Stain removal solutions

- Enzymes are a type of protein found in living matter and used for stain removal and found in some laundry products. They have the ability to breakdown protein type stains, such as blood, meat juice, dairy products, baby formula, and vegetable proteins. Enzymes contain amylase (for starch), protease (for protein), and lipase (for fats). Reading product labels for best use is always recommended.
- Liquid chlorine bleach has a limited shelf life. If your bleach is more than six months old and has no effect on stains, it may need to be replaced with fresh bleach.
- To test for colorfastness of liquid chlorine bleach, mix 1 tablespoon of bleach with 1/4 cup of water. Use an eyedropper or cotton-tipped swab to put a drop of this solution on a hidden seam or pocket edge inside the garment. Let it stand for two minutes, then blot dry. If there is no color change, it is safe to use the product. Powdered bleach packages have directions for doing colorfastness tests.
- Most stain removal charts and instructions apply to washable items. Be sure to take “Dry Clean Only” garments to the dry cleaner.

### Quick facts on other products

- **Oxygen (color-safe) bleaches** are gentler, working safely on all washable fabrics. They work best in maintaining whiteness, not in restoring it.
- **Prewashed soil and stain removers** - It's best to treat the stain as quickly as possible. Use liquid, gel and spray removers just before washing the garment. If the stain still remains, apply a second treatment, rubbing directly into the stain.
- **Laundry disinfectants and color/dye catching products** are available. Read the label first. Each disinfectant and product has instructions on the label that tell you important facts.

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