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Dealing with Stains

Since Thanksgiving is tomorrow and you, or someone you know, will likely spill something on their best clothes. I thought I'd cover how to deal with stains.

First, note that I'm not a textile or cleaning expert. The best cleaner I know of in the United States is [RAVE FabriCARE](#). They cleaned Jesse's suit after he poured Lifeway Kefir all over it, and did an excellent job. Last year, just around this time, they published a post on how to deal with Thanksgiving stains. Their advice? Don't listen to people around you. They're likely just rehashing things that are a mixture of folklore, old wives tales, and hazy memories about something they heard a few years back. Instead, just gently blot the spill or splatter with a cotton towel or napkin. *Don't rub; don't scrub; just blot.* Then leave it alone and bring it to a quality cleaner. They don't say who, but I'll say it for them: [RAVE FabriCARE](#) likely to be considerably better than any professional cleaner near you (many of which are just drop off points for the same lowquality, mass cleaning companies). So, if you have something nice, send it to them.

There are good reasons to not treat things at home. Certain stains require certain cleaning methods, and if you apply the wrong one, you can set in the damage. If you insist on laundering at home, however, I thought I'd reprint the following

advice from the ninth edition of *J.J. Pizzuto's Fabric Science*, a textbook popularly used for textile classes in fashion and design schools. Obviously, before you take any of this advice below, consult with the care label on your garments and directions on your cleaning products.

- **Candle wax, paraffin:** Freeze and scrape; place between paper towels or tissues and press with warm iron; place face down on paper towels and sponge with cleaning fluid or rubbing alcohol; wash.
- **Chocolate, cocoa:** Soak in club soda or cool water with enzyme presoak; sponge with cleaning fluid and later with detergent; launder in hot water
- **Coffee, tea:** Soak with enzyme presoak or oxygen bleach; rub with detergent; wash in hot water.
- **Egg:** If dried, scrape with a dull knife; soak in cool water with enzyme presoak; rub with detergent; launder in hot water.
- **Fruits, juices:** Soak with enzyme presoak; wash. If stain remains, cover with paste of oxygen bleach and a few drops of ammonia for 15 to 20 minutes. Can also try white vinegar; wash as hot as possible.
- **Gravy:** Scrape with a dull knife; soak in enzyme presoak; treat with detergent paste and later cleaning fluid; hot wash with bleach if safe.
- **Grease, oil, or margarine:** Scrape off all excess or apply absorbent powder (talcum or cornstarch) and brush off; pretreat with strong detergent; rinse; sponge with cleaning fluid; hot wash with extra detergent; bleach if safe.
- **Ice cream:** Soak in enzyme presoak; rinse; rub with detergent; rinse and let dry; sponge with cleaning fluid if needed; rinse; hot wash with bleach if safe.
- **Milk:** Soak in enzyme presoak; rinse; rub with detergent; launder.
- **Mustard:** Spray with prewash or rub with bar soap or liquid detergent; rinse; soak in hot water and detergent; launder with bleach if safe.
- **Peanut butter:** Saturate with mineral oil to dislodge oil particles from fibers; blot; apply cleaning fluid and blot between absorbent mats; rinse and launder.
- **Soft drinks:** Dampen with cool water and rubbing alcohol or enzyme presoak; launder with bleach if safe; stain may appear later as a yellow area.
- **Tomato products:** Sponge with cold water; rub with detergent; launder in hot water with bleach if safe.

- **Wine:** Same as for fruits; sprinkle a red wine spill immediately with salt (my own note: I've had good luck soaking red wine spills in white wine, but I can't say there's any science to it)

For more stain solutions, you can check out University of Illinois Extensions' Guide, which I posted about last year.