

TABS

INTERNATIONAL FABRICARE INSTITUTE BULLETIN

BEVERAGE STAINS

No. 299

WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

Sometimes after drycleaning, yellow, tan, or brown stains mysteriously appear on a garment that nobody remembers seeing before.

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?

When these stains eventually show up they simply look like accidental spillage spots. They can range from very faint yellow up to an intense rust or brown color depending upon the staining substance, time on the fabric, and the type of fabric.

WHAT CAUSED IT?

These stains originate from accidental contact with soft drinks, tea, coffee, juices, beer, wine, fruits, candy, or any other foods or beverages that contain sugars or tannin. After any moisture evaporates from the substances only an invisible residue remains. Over a period of time in storage this residue will attract oxygen from the air and oxidize, eventually becoming yellowish and noticeable. This type of staining is often referred to as “invisible stains.” Since these stains are basically water soluble, they are not readily removed by drycleaning. Subsequently, the heat of tumble drying and/or steam pressing after drycleaning accelerates oxidation of the residue and causes the stains to become much more visible.

CAN IT BE PREVENTED?

In order to prevent invisible stains from appearing later in storage or after cleaning, the residue must be flushed from the fabric soon after contact. This needs to be done before oxidation begins. The safest procedure is to take the garment to the professional cleaner as soon as possible and point out the location of the spill and identify the type of substance causing the stain.



These stains became noticeable after cleaning when the residue from a sugar-bearing liquid in the fabric oxidized.

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE?

The responsibility rests with the person that originally came into contact with the staining substance and failed to take fast action to remove the residue. Unfortunately, many times the owner of the garment doesn't know about the contact or simply forgets because the remaining residue may remain invisible for a period of time. When the staining begins to oxidize and appears after awhile or after cleaning, the memory of the spillage is long gone.

IS THERE A REMEDY?

Professional cleaners have special agents and procedures that can reduce or remove some of these stains, but after oxidation begins complete removal is very difficult. On some fabrics, such as silk and wool, oxidized stains from tannins and sugars are almost always permanent.