

## CARE & MAINTENANCE OF INTERIOR COATINGS

Interior coatings are designed to provide both aesthetic appeal and long-term protection. However, even premium paint systems require proper care to maintain appearance and durability. The following guidelines outline best practices for cleaning, stain removal, touch-up, and periodic maintenance of interior painted surfaces.

### Initial Cure and Early Care

Newly painted surfaces require time to fully dry before they are cleaned. Most manufacturers recommend allowing a minimum of two weeks prior to washing. A drying period of at least two weeks is typically advised before washing. Actual dry time can vary based on factors such as temperature, humidity, ventilation, and the thickness of the applied film. Cleaning too soon can compromise film integrity, reduce sheen uniformity, or create visible burnishing. During the initial drying period, avoid scrubbing, contact with abrasive materials, or exposure to excessive moisture.

### Routine Maintenance: Start with the Least Aggressive Method

Preventative maintenance is the most effective strategy for extending the life of an interior coating. Regular dust removal using a vacuum with a soft brush attachment or a microfiber cloth minimizes soil buildup. Removing dust before it becomes embedded in the paint film reduces the need for aggressive cleaning later.

When washing is required, use the least aggressive cleaner possible. A soft sponge or lint-free cloth dampened with warm water and a mild detergent solution is typically sufficient (Figure 1). Apply light pressure in a circular motion, taking care not to abrade the surface. Excess water should be avoided and rinse the surface to remove any cleaner residue. Residual cleaner left on the wall can attract dirt and reduce long-term appearance.



Figure 1

If mild detergent does not remove soil, escalate gradually. Premixed spray cleaners or diluted concentrated cleaners may be used following label instructions. Never allow cleaners to dry on the surface, and rinse thoroughly where recommended.

Avoid abrasive cleaners or pads unless absolutely necessary, as these can burnish lower sheen finishes and create shiny spot. Bleach- or ammonia-containing cleaners should not be mixed and must be used cautiously, as they may discolor or damage the paint film.

## Periodic Inspection and Maintenance

Routine inspection of high-traffic areas such as corridors, kitchens, bathrooms, and around switches and door hardware is recommended. Addressing soil early reduces the likelihood of permanent staining.

In moisture-prone areas, monitor for surfactant leaching or mildew. Surfactant leaching typically presents as streaking on freshly applied waterborne coatings and can often be cleaned away following manufacturer recommendations. Adequate ventilation and humidity control are essential to maintain coating performance.

If repeated cleaning has changed the sheen or if stains cannot be fully removed, spot priming and touch-up may be needed. For touch-ups, use paint from the original container whenever possible and ensure the color and sheen match the existing finish. (See Technical Bulletin #7, *Touch-Up*, for additional guidance on achieving the best results.) In large areas or high-visibility locations, repainting the entire wall section—corner to corner—often delivers the most uniform appearance.

## Key Takeaways

The long-term performance of interior coatings depends on a thoughtful and controlled maintenance approach. Best practices include allowing adequate dry time before cleaning, starting with the mildest cleaning method, testing cleaning agents before broad application, avoiding abrasive techniques that may cause burnishing, and using more aggressive cleaning methods only when necessary.

When maintained properly, interior coatings can retain their intended appearance and functional performance for many years. A well-structured cleaning and maintenance program helps preserve visual quality, protect the integrity of the coating film, and extend repaint cycles.

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