

Editor's note: This is a special TABS displaying some common problems that don't appear until after the cleaning process. Prior to cleaning, to the naked eye they are "invisible" problems.

INVISIBLE PROBLEMS

No. 302

STAINS



This sweater has no staining substances on it.



The sweater here was stained with juice and has not been cleaned. The stains are still invisible.



After cleaning the stains are now quite noticeable.

FIBER DAMAGE



The pants have not yet been attacked by insects.



After moth larvae have been active on the same pants, a close up picture reveals no holes.



Holes appear after the agitation of the cleaning process.

COLOR LOSS



This blouse is clean and has no chemical spillage on it.



Substances containing alcohol were spilled on the same blouse leaving a faint stain.



After cleaning, the stain is removed and local color loss appears.

INVISIBLE PROBLEMS

STAINS

Sometimes mysterious stains appear on garments after a period of time in storage with no prior knowledge of how they got there in the first place. Also, faint stains may appear worse or invisible stains may show up only after the garment is cleaned.

In the first picture on the reverse side we have an unstained sweater. A beverage was then spilled on the sweater and when it dried there was no visible stain. The second picture shows this same sweater a couple of weeks later and still no stain is visible. The sweater was then taken to be cleaned and the heat of this process accelerated the oxidation of the invisible sugars and tannin residues that were in the staining substance. As seen in the third picture, the invisible stain is now quite visible after cleaning.

Many substances can react this way when they contact fabrics. Animal proteins such as milk, egg, perspiration, and many others found in food and beverages will eventually cause such stains. Also, oils from foods, skin lotions, and lubricants will oxidize and appear due to the heat of tumble drying or pressing. And of course, we can't forget that the most common invisible stain is caused by oxidation of tannins and sugars found in fruits, soft drinks, juices, tea, coffee, beer, wine, candy, and many other beverages and foods.

Again, many of these stains only show up after cleaning to everyone's surprise.

FIBER DAMAGE

Another invisible problem is when holes appear after cleaning when no damage was noted prior to the cleaning procedure. In some cases, this damage could be from contact with chemicals during use prior to cleaning and in other instances, the damage could be from insect attack.

The first picture on the reverse side shows a relatively new pair of pants that have not come into contact with either damaging chemicals or insects. In the second picture, the legs of the pants have been attacked by insects while at home in storage, but there are no visible signs yet. Some time later the pants were taken to the cleaners for cleaning and the mysterious holes appeared. While feeding on the fabric, the insect weakened the fibers. During the agitation of the cleaning process, the weakened and cut fibers fell out, leaving holes, as seen in the third picture. Moth larvae are the most common offenders of this type of damage, but cockroaches, silverfish, carpet beetles, and other insects can cause similar damage.

Other cases of surprise holes after cleaning are caused by contact with fabric-damaging chemicals such as acids or chlorides. On some fabrics only weak chemicals such as perspiration, antiperspirants, or acid beverages can eventually cause damage. In other instances, strong mineral acids such as laboratory, metal cleaning, or battery acids are the cause.

COLOR LOSS

A very common invisible problem is when color loss shows up after cleaning. As can be seen in the first picture on the reverse side, the blouse is in pristine condition with no stains or color loss.

In the second picture the blouse has been stained with a beverage containing alcohol, which is invisible for a while but has oxidized over time and left a faint stain. In this case, the stain was removed in cleaning, but the third picture shows the loss of color that has resulted from the alcohol. Some other products that contain alcohol include perfume, skin freshener, after shave, cologne, hair spray, lotions, and some medicines.

Another common invisible color loss problem occurs from accidental contact with bleaching agents. Such agents are found in home bleaches, scouring products and other cleaning agents, hair care products, disinfectants, acne preparations, and other skin lotions and medicines.

All of the above solutions may be invisible until the heat of drying or pressing after cleaning accelerates the chemicals. Thus, the color loss spots will show up only after the care process. □