

MEDIA RELEASE

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The solution for the clothing stain may be in the nursery

- Australians send \$500 Million of fashion clothing to the tip every year
- Charities take 22 tonnes of clothing waste per day, but use only 10%
- Baby wipes and talcum powder help to remove stains

Have you ever exclaimed 'oopsy' as you feel something fall from your mouth? You know it has probably hit your clothes and you quickly look for the damage, hoping that it may have missed. You know if it did hit your clothes it will cause you pain.

Many men know the problem. Beer stains on the tie and shirt, and after festivities, beetroot stains from a late night hamburger. Women on the other hand may suffer from champagne and chocolate stains on their dress after a night with the 'girls'. Indeed, there was a recent case of a consumer suing a retailer because her champagne stain did not come out, ruining her expensive silk skirt.

Yes, stains are the bane of us all, and with frustration many throw the stained garment away; although some hardy souls still wear their stain riddled favourite top.

Be it grass stains, grease, mud, lipstick, red wine, perspiration, blood or the daily parenting tests from active children, the challenge for many Australians is what to do, and when to get rid of the stain and save the garment. Sadly, too often consumers are ruining the garment by not treating the stain effectively.

Council of Textile and Fashion Industries of Australia (TFIA) CEO Richard Evans says with a change of behaviour in the way we buy, care and clean our fashion and accessories consumers could save more than \$600 a year. "Care labels are often ignored by consumers, much to their detriment," Evans said. "But, simple, easy to use, products can be the best solution."

"A baby wipe has saved many favourite garments; even baby powder is incredibly effective in treating a stain." Evans said. "Baby powder is very fine and acts as mini sponges soaking up oil and cleansing fibres."

Australian households average \$2,600 per year on clothing, footwear and accessories, and an unexpected stain soon after purchase can mean we have wasted the investment.

"The one-fix-all toxic, chemical spot removers aren't a good solution as they can harm natural fibres such as silk, wool and cotton," Evans said.

Some synthetic stain removers are flammable and many people can be allergic or sensitive to harsh ingredients. Many aerosol stain removers contain neurotoxic petroleum solvents and can permeate a home, causing toxic air pollution. There are safer alternatives.

"It is surprising how well baby wipes and steam can remove stubborn stains," Evans said. "The first rule is to treat a stain quickly. Never rub it ... guys are you listening? ... and don't let the stain set; and by not using harsh chemicals, the garment can be saved and not thrown out."

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Textile and fabric experts advise:

- First scrape, blot, vacuum or otherwise remove as much of the stain as you can. NEVER rub the stain.
- Identify the stain; this is important as the chemistry of the stain will determine the right treatment.
- Warm or cool water is the safest stain removal because hot water and heat can set stains. Think twice about throwing the stained clothing into the laundry basket. The heat of the water and dryer can bond many stains.
- Avoid rubbing and pressure. If you are home, treat it immediately; if you are out, dab water onto the stained area with tissue paper or paper towels until the stain is saturated. It may be a little uncomfortable, but it will prevent the stain being permanent.

“On average we throw out 30kg of clothing and textile items a year,” Evans said. “Australian charities report receiving 22 tonnes of clothing waste per day, but they estimate only 10% is of resell quality. The rest goes to textile recycling.”

“The fastest growing household waste in Australia is clothing,” Evans said. “If we are like other western countries then we only recycle 18% of clothing compared to 55% for paper, and 63% of metal packaging.”

“There are many websites with stain removal guidance that can help consumers save their clothes,” Evans said. “We may live in a material world, but we can save that material with some old world remedies.”

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