

Clothing Fact Sheet

Silk: Special Fabric Needs Special Care



Silk garments have grown in popularity and are available at many price levels. Whatever the cost, fabrics made from silk fiber demand special care. Consumers should understand silk's characteristics as well as the use and care recommendations to maintain and extend the life of silk garments and accessories.

Silk is a strong fiber but can be weakened by perspiration, deodorants and sunlight. Silk is absorbent so it dyes easily, but some dye colors tend to bleed and fade in water and during stain removal procedures. According to dry cleaners, red, green, blue and purple dyes are especially prone to problems. Sunlight will fade silk items and turn white silk garments yellow.

To prolong the beauty and life of silk garments, follow these guidelines in use and care. Use care in dressing and grooming to avoid staining silk items. Silk fabric is easily damaged by alcohol-based products such as hair spray and perfumes, and chemical products such as nail polish remover. Apply perfume and hair spray before putting on a silk garment as the mist from such products may cause stains.

Once dressed, cover the garment with a towel before applying hair spray. Do not polish nails while wearing a silk garment as nail polish can remove color, damaging the fabric permanently.

Some silk garments must be dry cleaned; others can be hand washed. Whether the garment is washable or dry cleanable depends on the dye, finish, garment style and construction. Always follow the care instructions on the permanent care label in the garment.

Do not over wear a silk garment before cleaning it. Wash or dry clean soon after garment becomes soiled.

Use garment shields to prevent permanent stains from perspiration. Chloride salts found in perspiration and deodorants can weaken silk fibers and, depending on the fabric construction, cause splitting at the underarms as well as staining. Perspiration can damage certain dyes.

If you spill something on your silk garment, **don't** put water on the spotted area. Water may set the stain or cause a permanent ring. Take the item – even a washable silk item – to a dry cleaners as soon as possible. Tell the cleaner what you spilled, where the stain is and how long it has been there. These factors are important because the stain's type and age determine garment handling and spotting procedures.

Handle washable items with extra care, noting instructions on the care label. Wash only unstained garments, and consider the following guidelines:

Care Tips for Washable Silk

1. Use a mild soap and cool or warm water. Strong alkaline detergents weaken silk.
2. Wash each garment separately as dyes may bleed.
3. Handle silk garments gently. Don't wring or twist the garment because silk is weaker when wet. After thorough rinsing, roll the item in a clean bath towel to remove excess moisture.
4. Don't use pre-soak products or chlorine bleach; both will damage silk.
5. Air dry the garment away from sunlight until damp dry. Use a padded or plastic hanger to distribute the weight of the wet garment.
6. While damp, press the silk item from the wrong side with a dry iron at a warm (silk) setting. A steam iron at a low setting may be used, being sure the iron doesn't "spit," which would cause water spots. Iron the fabric dry. Use a press cloth when doing touch ups on the right side of the garment.

Silk is special. The care you give your silk garments will repay you in prolonged garment life.