

Countertops and Backsplash

COUNTERTOPS AND BACKSPLASH: OVERVIEW

One or more materials have been incorporated into your kitchen, bath, or utility counters and backsplash to provide durable and attractive surfaces for your cooking, bathing, and other activities. All of the materials used in counters and backsplashes share certain use and care recommendations, as well as additional cautions that are described in the material-specific sections of this guide.



General Guidelines

- **Follow Manufacturer's Recommendations**

Review the manufacturer's specific care and use guidance for countertops that are manufactured products, such as synthetic solid surfaces or laminates. There may be specific information on harmful household substances beyond those mentioned here that should be avoided.

- **Caulking Maintenance is Important**

Maintain caulking at backs, ends, or other joints with the appropriate caulking as discussed in the "Caulking" section of this guide. Generally, these joints are best sealed with a mildew-resistant silicone caulk.

- **Protect Your Counters from Hot Items**

Do not set hot pans or items directly on counters. Use trivets or other protection.

- **Clean Surfaces Regularly**

Quickly clean-up liquids or other substances from countertop surfaces. Clean with a damp, nonabrasive cloth; use other cleansers only as appropriate to the surface and as required for more stubborn cleaning. If you have a stain that will not come up simply with water, consult with a home improvement expert about products that will work on the stain.

- **Don't Sit on Counters!**

Do not sit on the countertops; excessive weight can cause countertops to warp or pull away from the wall.

- **Use Cutting Boards—Don't Cut on Surfaces**

Avoid cutting and chopping directly on the surface; use a cutting board.

CULTURED MARBLE COUNTERTOPS

Cultured marble countertops are similar, and often referred to as, solid surfaces. Cultured marble is made from marble dust and high strength polyester resin in a process that involves several steps. It is usually stronger than common marble and is widely used in bathroom surfaces and products like shower pans, bathtubs, vanity tops, shower surrounds, and bases. Though it is durable and hard, it needs proper care and maintenance to last several years. Cleaning cultured marble is not very hard, but one needs to know about what should or should not be used on them to avoid possible damage. This is because the use of wrong products can result in considerable damage, especially to the gel coat that imparts that brilliant glaze to these products. Below are some ways on how to clean cultured marble.

If maintained properly, cultured marble can be quite durable and can last for several years. Proper cleaning is also a crucial part of daily care and maintenance, which can be efficiently performed by following these simple tips outlined above.

Follow the general countertop recommendations listed in the “Countertops: Overview” section of this guide. In addition, observe the expert advice below for cultured marble.

Important Information

- **Renew Cultured Marble.** Purchase a product such as Gel-gloss to renew cultured marble surfaces.
- **Protect the Counters.** Although it may be possible to repair minor scratches and abrasions by light sanding and buffing, avoid cutting directly on the countertop.

Cleaning Tips

Regular cleaning is the best way to keep your cultured marble free from stains, soap scum, and dirt. If possible, excess water from the shower base and surrounding areas should be squeezed out after each shower to prevent water stains. For stubborn hard water stains, you can use vinegar for cleaning the marble surface. Vinegar can also be used to remove soap scum without damaging the seal. Just spray some distilled white vinegar on the surface and let it stay for sometime, around half an hour. Then rinse the surface with water, and wipe with a soft damp cloth. Never use warm water on the surface of cultured marble, even for cleaning purposes.

Use of abrasive cleaners like scrubbing sponges, scouring powder, and steel wool should be avoided, as they can scratch the surface. They can also damage the seal applied on the surface of cultured marble. Instead, you can use a mild soap or detergent cleaner or an all-purpose cleaner for the daily cleaning of marble surfaces.

Simply spray the cleaner on the surface and then gently wipe with a soft and damp cloth. Use of cleaners that contain harsh chemicals such as acids is not advisable. Use water-based cleaners or those that are pH-neutral. Never begin cleaning without first wetting the surface.

Stubborn Stains

For removing stubborn stains from cultured marble, you may require a harsher cleaner. Mix 1/4 cup each of baking soda, vinegar, and ammonia and dilute it in eight cups of water. Wipe the stains with this solution and leave on for 10 minutes. Then wash off with cold water. Repeat if necessary. Alternatively, mop the area with a soft rag that has been dipped in hydrogen peroxide and let it stay overnight. Wipe off the stain the next morning and rinse with water. Many people prefer to use turpentine, paint thinner or denatured alcohol in such a situation. But before applying such products, they should be tried on a small inconspicuous area to avoid any major damage. You can also take the advice of a professional or the manufacturer of the product to clarify any doubt regarding the use of such substances on your cultured marble products.

Recommended Maintenance Tasks	Frequency
Renew the surface of cultured marble with a manufacturer recommended product.	As needed

Effects of Deferred Maintenance

Improper or neglected maintenance and care of the countertop may result in premature deterioration, loss of visual appeal, higher replacement or repair costs, water intrusion, and possible voiding of your Fit and Finish Warranty.

NATURAL STONE COUNTERTOPS

Natural stone countertops (such as granite, limestone, marble, or travertine) features a great deal of color and veining variation and are never exactly alike. Lack of consistency of the stone and the resin is not considered a flaw, but part of its natural beauty. These countertops are highly durable but may be scratched, chipped, and stained with misuse.

Follow the general countertop recommendations listed in the “Countertops: Overview” section of this guide. In addition, observe the expert advice below for natural stone.

Important Information

- **Seal the Stone.** Sealing the stone is strongly recommended in order to prevent staining. Tile and stone stores carry specific cleaning agents and sealers.
- **Acidic Liquids.** Some types of natural stone are vulnerable to damage from acidic liquids, such as citrus juices, tomato juice, and vinegar. Sealers will help protect the surfaces.
- **Consult a Professional for Repairs.** Repair chips, scratches, burns, and stains using the manufacturer-recommended techniques, or consult a professional.

Cleaning Tips

Clean with neutral cleaner or stone soap and warm water. Avoid cleansers that are abrasive or products that contain lemon, vinegar or other acids. Do not use steel wool or polish. Blot up spills immediately.

Recommended Maintenance Tasks	Frequency
Dust the surface.	Regularly
Clean the stone with a few drops of neutral cleaner or stone soap and warm water.	Regularly, after each use, when practical
Repair chips, scratches, burns, and stains using the manufacturer recommended techniques, or consult a professional.	As needed
Reseal the stone.	Every 1–2 years or as needed

Effects of Deferred Maintenance

Improper or neglected maintenance and care of your countertop may result in premature deterioration, loss of visual appeal, higher replacement or repair costs, water intrusion, and possible voiding of your Fit and Finish Warranty.