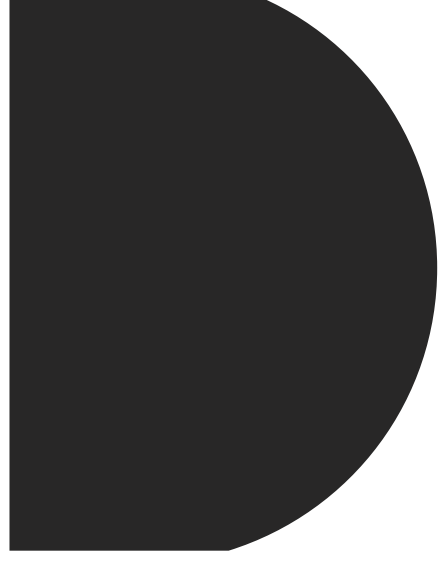


Natural Stone Slabs

Maintenance & Cleaning Guide



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Care Maintenance & Cleaning Guide

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Natural Stone Slabs

1.0 Introduction

Natural stone slabs is a premium building material valued for its durability, timeless appearance and unique natural character. Each slab of stone is formed by nature and will contain distinctive patterns, colour variations and natural characteristics making each piece one of a kind. When properly cared for, natural stone can provide a beautiful and durable surface that will perform for many years.

Because natural stone is a porous and organic material, it can be affected by everyday substances such as dirt, spills, acidic liquids and harch cleaning products. It requires appropriate care and maintenance to preserve its appearance and performance. Routine cleaning, correct maintenance practices and the prompt management of spills or contaminants will help protect the surface from staining, etching and premature wear.

This guide has been prepared to provide practical advice on the correct care and maintenance of your natural stone slab surfaces. By following the recommended cleaning methods, using suitable products and observing the maintenance guidelines outlined in this manual, you can help ensure your natural stone continues to perform as intended and retains its natural beauty over time.

2.0 Stone Properties and General Recommendations

Stone Type	Stone Properties	Porosity Level	General Recommendations	Cleaning Solution
Granite	Dense, crystalline rock made primarily of quartz, feldspar, and mica.	High	Granite is durable and relatively dense compared with other natural stones, however, it is still prone to staining and the surface should be checked periodically to ensure that the protective sealer remainins effective.	Ph neutral cleaning solutions only
Limestone	Composed mostly of calcium carbonate, limestone is a sedimentary stone that is somewhat more porous than marble. It can absorb liquids and stains if not properly sealed, especially in kitchens and bathrooms.	High	Pre-sealing is recommended. It is highly sensitive to acids and special care must be taken when cleaning.	Ph neutral cleaning solutions only
Marble	A metamorphic rock primarily made of calcite, marble is often used for elegant surfaces like countertops and decorative elements.	High	While it is less porous than limestone, it is still prone to etching from acidic substances and requires regular sealing to maintain its look.	Ph neutral cleaning solutions only

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3.0 Sealing Natural Stone

Sealing is an important part of protecting your natural stone surfaces. Natural stone products are porous, meaning they can absorb liquids if they are not properly sealed. A suitable water-based penetrating sealer such as PCA PavShield Pro-WB helps reduce the absorption of moisture, oils and other substances that may cause staining.

Application of Penetrating Sealer

All natural stone surfaces must be sealed using a high-quality penetrating sealer prior to use and maintained at intervals not exceeding six (6) months. The initial application of sealer is critical and must be carried out strictly in accordance with the manufacturer’s instructions, ensuring full surface saturation and adequate dwell time. Inadequate or improper sealing will result in accelerated staining, moisture absorption, discolouration, and premature deterioration of the stone.

Ensure that a high-quality product such as PCA PavShield Pro-WB is used which is specifically formulated for natural stone protection and is compatible with the pH-neutral cleaning regime. The use of inferior, non-specialised, topical, or film-forming sealers must be avoided, as they can trap moisture, cause surface hazing, or fail under normal service conditions.

Natural stone is a porous, mineral-based material with defined strength limitations. It is not resistant to aggressive chemicals, acidic cleaners, harsh solvents, or abrasive cleaning pads. Proper sealing and resealing, combined with gentle, non-acidic maintenance products, is essential to safeguard the stone from staining, etching, chemical attack, and structural weakening. Failure to comply with these sealing requirements will significantly reduce the performance, longevity, and appearance of the installation.

Important Note

It is important to note that sealers do not make natural stone completely stain-proof. Instead, they slow the absorption of liquids into the stone. So even when natural stone has a penetrating sealer, staining can still occur.

Many household products contain strong pigments, dyes, oils or acids that can still work their way into the stone’s pores if left sitting. Some items, such as hair dye, will stain the stone on contact as they are designed to colour on contact and are aggressive in nature.

A sealer is not a last resort, it is only a temporary barrier designed to give you more time to clean up spills, and will not stop stains from forming if spills are not wiped away immediately.

Recommended type of Sealing Product	Purpose	Best For	How it Works
Water-Based Penetrating Sealer	These are eco-friendly sealers that protect natural stone surfaces while being safe for the environment.	Indoor stone surfaces or when low odor is a priority	Water-based sealers protect the stone while emitting fewer fumes, making them safer for indoor use. They offer temporary protection without altering the stone’s appearance too much.

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4.0 General Cleaning & Maintenance

Regular cleaning and following a routine maintenance plan are essential to preserve the appearance and performance of natural stone surfaces. This section outlines the recommended care practices for maintaining natural stone within the home. Following these recommendations will help minimise the risk of staining, surface damage and premature wear, ensuring that the natural stone continues to perform and retain its appearance over time.

Daily Cleaning	Daily cleaning is mainly focused on removing light dust, dirt and everyday residues that accumulated during normal use. Typically involving wiping the surface with warm water and a pH-neutral stone cleaner using a soft cloth. Daily cleaning helps keep the surface hygienic and prevents dirt from building up. Recommended cleaning steps: 1. Remove loose dust or dirt using a soft cloth, microfibre cloth or dust mop. 2. Clean the surface with warm water and a pH-neutral stone cleaner such as PCA Stone Soap. 3. Wipe over the surface with a soft cloth ensuring that all cleaner residues have been cleaned away. 4. Dry the surface with a clean cloth to prevent streaks or water marks Helpful tips: • Clean spills as soon as possible to minimise the risk of staining • Use coasters, trays or placements on stone benchtops and tables • Place protective pads under large or heavy items to avoid scratching.
Deep Cleaning	In addition to daily cleaning, natural stone surfaces may require thorough cleaning on a weekly basis. Weekly deep cleaning is a more thorough process designed to remove and build up or grime, oils or cleaning product residue that may not have been fully removed during the daily cleaning. During a weekly clean, allow the cleaner to dwell briefly on the surface, and clean more thoroughly around any joins or high use areas.
Professional Cleaning	All natural stone slabs must be maintained under a strict cleaning and sealing regime to ensure long-term performance. This includes a mandatory maintenance cycle of no longer than six (6) months between each professional clean and penetrating sealer reapplication. Only pH-neutral, non-acidic stone-safe cleaners are to be used under all circumstances. Acidic, abrasive or high-alkaline cleaning agents are strictly prohibited, as they will cause irreversible surface etching, discolouration, and degradation. Due to the inherent characteristics and natural porosity of stone, these products have intended-use limitations and are not designed to withstand harsh chemical exposure, aggressive cleaning methods, or neglect of regular sealing. To preserve surface integrity and appearance, a high-quality product should be chosen for all cleaning and maintenance procedures, including approved penetrating sealers and daily/weekly cleaning agents. Strict adherence to this maintenance protocol is essential to ensure the durability, aesthetic longevity, and performance of the natural stone installation.

Activity	Daily	Weekly	Quarterly	Biannually	Comments
General cleaning	✓				Daily cleaning to remove dirt and dust and typical residues.
Deep Cleaning		✓			Weekly cleaning to remove any built up grime, oils or remaining cleaning residue.
Professional Cleaning				✓	Only pH-neutral, non-acidic stone-safe cleaners are to be used under all circumstances.
Application of water-based penetrating sealer				✓	Stone should be sealed using PCA PaveShield Pro-WB
Visual inspection of stone		✓			Regularly inspect stone for signs of staining or wear and tear

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5.0 Dealing with Typical Stains

Group	Stain Type	Effect on Stone	Recommendation
Oil Based	Grease, plumbers' putty, tar, cooking oil, milk and cosmetics	An oil based stain will darken the stone and normally must be chemically dissolved so source of the stain can be flushed or rinsed away.	Clean gently with a soft, PH neutral liquid cleaner such as PCA Stone Soap
Organic	Coffee, tea, wine, juice, leaves, bark, bird droppings	May cause a pinkish-brown stain and may disappear after the source of the stain has been removed.	Immediately blot the stain with a soft cloth. Do not rub, as this may spread the stain. Clean the stone with a PH neutral liquid cleaner such as PCA Stone Soap. Rinse and dry the surface.
Food Stains	Can be acidic (like tomato & vinegar) or contain oils (like mustard)	Stain type will vary depending on the type of food which has come into contact with the stone.	As with organic stains, food stains should be wiped up immediately to avoid permanent damage. Clean the area with a pH neutral liquid cleaner such as PCA Stone Soap. Rinse and dry the surface.
Metal	Iron, rust, copper, bronze	Rust stains are orange to brown in colour and follow the shape of the object. Copper and bronze stains appear as green or muddy-brown and result from the action of moisture on nearby or embedded bronze, copper or brass items	Metal stains must be removed with a poultice. Deep seated, rusty stains are extremely difficult to remove and the stone may be permanently stained.
Biological	Algae, mildew, lichens, moss, fungi	May cause a greenish-brown stain and may disappear after the source of the stain has been removed.	Clean with a pH neutral stone safe biological cleaner, or mould remover specifically designed by natural stone.
Soap Scum	Soap residue	Film or stain on surface, particularly in bathrooms and kitchens	Using a non-abrasive cloth, use a stone safe cleaner to remove the soap scum
Ink	Magic marker, pen, ink	Stain on surface of stone	Apply rubbing alcohol (isopropyl alcohol) to a soft cloth and gently blot the stain. Be cautious with this method, as it may etch the surface of the stone.
Paint	Latex and Acrylic paint	Normally these paints will not cause staining on the stone	Small amounts can be removed with a lacquer thinner or scraped off with a razor blade. Heavy painter coverage should be removed with a commercial "heavy liquid" paint stripper. These strippers normally contain caustic soda or lye. Do not use acids or flame tools to strip paint from stone. Caution – paint strippers can etch the surface of the stone and repolishing may be necessary. Only use wood or plastic scrapers for removing sludge and curdled paint.
	Oil based paint	May cause an oil based stain on the stone	After removing the paint, refer to section on oil-based stains
Efflorescence	Caused by the deposition of mineral salts carried by water from below the surface of the stone	A white powder that may appear on the surface of the stone	New installation – dust mop or vacuum the powder. Repeat as necessary as the stone dries out. Do not use water to remove the powder as it will only temporary disappear. If the problem persists, contact your installer to help identify and remove the cause of the moisture.
Water Spots & Rings	Surface accumulation of hard water	May appear as a darkened area on the stone	The issue may resolve itself over time when allowed to completely dry. If it doesn't, buff with dry 0000 steel wool.
Etch Marks	Caused by acids left on the surface of the stone	Area may appear dull and not as smooth compared to the rest of the stone	Some products will etch the finish but not leave a stain. Others will both etch and stain. Contact a professional stone restorer for refinishing or repolishing etched areas.

Please note that further professional advice should be sought before taking any action based on the information provided. Bettertiles accepts no responsibility for the performance of cleaning products, nor for any damages arising from their use, as quality control and application fall outside our direct control.

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6.0 Common Household Products that can Damage Natural Stone

Many common household products contain acids, harsh chemicals or abrasives that can damage natural stone surfaces. These products should not be used on natural stone:

Examples Include:

- Vinegar
- Lemon or citrus cleaners
- Bleach
- Ammonia-based cleaners
- Bathroom grout or tile cleaners not specifically designed for natural stone
- Abrasive powders or cream cleaners
- Scouring pads or steel wool

In addition, caution should be taken with these common household items when placing or using them near natural stone, please note that these are some examples and it is not an exhaustive list of common items which can stain natural stone:

Examples Include:

- Red wine
- Coffee and tea
- Cooking oils and grease
- Citrus fruit and juices
- Tomato based sauces
- Vinegar food dressing
- Makeup products (foundation, powders and pigments)
- Hair dye or beard dye
- Ink and permanent markers
- Coloured liquers

7.0 Best Practice for Stain Removal

Prompt Action:

Always clean up marks or spills as soon as they happen to prevent stains from setting into the stone.

Test First:

Always test any cleaning solution or poultice on a small, inconspicuous area before applying it to the entire stain.

Re-Sealing:

After stain removal, particularly with porous stones, re-seal the stone to protect it from future staining and moisture penetration.

Consult a Professional:

For stubborn stains or valuable natural stone, it may be best to consult a stone care professional to avoid damaging the surface. By using the correct cleaning techniques for specific types of stains, you can maintain your natural stone surfaces' beauty and longevity.

8.0 Etching on Stone

Terrazzo, Marble, Travertine, Limestone, and Onyx are all natural stones that contain a significant amount of calcium carbonate. While these materials are prized for their beauty and elegance, they are also more prone to etching due to their chemical composition.

Can Etching Be Repaired?

Unlike stains, which can often be removed or reduced with specialised cleaners or poultices, etching cannot be removed with regular cleaning. Since etching involves a physical alteration of the stone's surface, repair typically involves:

Polishing the Surface:

A professional stone restoration expert can buff and polish the surface to remove or lessen the appearance of the etch. This process may involve using diamond abrasives or specialized stone polishing compounds to restore the stone's smooth finish.

Honing:

If the etching is extensive, the stone may need to be honed (re-surfaced) to restore its uniform appearance. This can be a more labor-intensive process.

Avoid DIY Etch Removal:

While some people try to remove etching with abrasive cleaners or tools, this often worsens the issue. Always seek professional help for serious etching.

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9.0 Structural Integrity and Impact Prevention

Natural stone is a premium material valued for its aesthetic appeal and durability. However, it is a rigid, non-flexible product and must be treated with appropriate care to prevent structural failure or surface damage.

Impact Damage

- Stone surfaces—particularly edges and overhangs—are susceptible to chipping, cracking, and “star” fracturing when subjected to blunt force.
- **Advisory:** Users must not impact the stone with any hard objects, including but not limited to heavy cookware, metal appliances, or tools.
 - **Consequences:** High-velocity or heavy impacts can cause irreversible structural damage or unsightly chips that require specialized professional resin repairs. Any impact that causes a hairline fracture may compromise the stone’s integrity over time.

Load Bearing and Weight Limits

- The stone installation is designed for standard residential or commercial countertop utility only. It is not engineered to function as a structural support or a high-capacity load-bearing surface.
- **Maximum Distributed Load:** The stone is not designed to bear a concentrated weight exceeding 15kg (equivalent to a heavy large bag of groceries).
 - **Static vs. Dynamic Loads:** Exceeding this weight limit, or placing heavy items down with force (dynamic loading), creates a high risk of “snapping” the slab, especially near cut-outs for sinks or cooktops where the material is at its thinnest.

Loading to Avoid

- To ensure the longevity of the installation and the safety of the users, the following restrictions apply:
- **No Sitting or Standing:** Benchtop surfaces are strictly not to be sat upon, stood upon, or leaned against with full body weight. Stone has high compressive strength but relatively low tensile strength; the weight of a person can cause an immediate and catastrophic snap.
 - **Intended Use Only:** Surfaces should be used exclusively for their intended purpose as a worktop or decorative surface. Using the stone as a step-ladder to reach high cupboards or as a seat.

Maintenance Note: Damage resulting from impact, overloading, or standing on the stone is generally classified as “misuse” and not covered under manufacturer or installer warranties. Should a crack or chip occur, contact a natural stone specialist immediately to assess the stability of the slab.

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10.0 Do & Don't Guide for Natural Stone Care

The following schedule provides a listing of items that will require both preventative and regular maintenance and the recommended frequency. Where slabs have been installed in commercial or public areas, this maintenance regime should be carefully adhered to.

Do	Don't
Clean surfaces regularly with a soft cloth using warm water and a pH-neutral stone cleaner such as PCA Stone Soap	Use vinegar, lemon or any type of acidic cleaner
Wipe up spills as soon as possible	Allow spills such as wine, coffee, juice or dyes to sit on the surface
Use soft cloths, microfibre cloths or dust mops for cleaning	Use abrasive pads, scouring pads or steel wool
Use coasters, placemats and trays on stone benchtops and tables	Place hot cookware or sharp objects directly on the surface
Pick up any heavy objects if they need to be moved	Drag heavy objects across the stone surfaces
Ensure that stone is re-sealed every 6 months	Assume that sealed stone is stain-proof

11.0 When to Seek Professional Advice

You should seek professional advice if any staining, etching, or surface damage occurs. It may be possible for a professional to restore the stone through professional cleaning, polishing or refinishing.

Homeowners should consider seeking advice from a qualified stone care professional if:

- A stain cannot be removed using standard cleaning methods
- the stone surface becomes dull or etched
- Deep scratches or damage occurs
- Resealing is required and the stone is also due for a professional clean

12.0 Disclaimer

Natural stone is a natural product and may contain inherent variations in colour, veining, texture and pattern. These characteristics are part of the natural beauty of the material and are not considered defects.

While natural stone is a durable building material, it is also porous and may be susceptible to staining, etching, scratching or other surface changes if it is not properly maintained or if inappropriate cleaning products are used.

the information provided in this guide is intended as general care and maintenance guidance for homeowners. Actual maintenance requirements may vary depending on the type of stone, finish, location and level of use.

The builder, supplier and installer accept no responsibility for damage resulting from improper cleaning methods, the use of unsuitable products, lack of maintenance, or normal wear and tear occurring after handover. Homeowners are responsible for the ongoing care and maintenance of natural stone surfaces in accordance with the recommendations outlined in this guide.

If uncertainty exists regarding appropriate cleaning, sealing or maintenance procedures, professional advice from a qualified stone care specialist should be sought.

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13.0 Essential Guideline and Care Tips

Avoid Acidic Substances	Clean up spills immediately to prevent acid from coming into contact with the stone. Use coasters, trivets, or placemats under drinks and food, particularly acidic ones.Vinegar and lemon juice are highly acidic and can cause etching, Never use vinegar or lemon juice to clean natural stone. Instead, use a pH-neutral cleaner or warm soapy water.
Use pH-Neutral Cleaners	Avoid using harsh chemicals or acidic cleaners on natural stone, Use pH-neutral stone cleaners specifically formulated for natural stone surfaces. These are designed to clean without damaging or dulling the stone.
Regular Cleaning	Wipe down stone surfaces regularly using a soft cloth or a microfiber duster to remove dust and dirt. Clean surfaces with a mild, pH-neutral cleaner and a soft cloth or sponge.
Seal the Stone	Apply a sealer to the stone to create a protective barrier. However, keep in mind that penetrating sealers do not prevent etching. Sealers should be reapplied periodically, depending on the stone’s porosity and the level of use.
Protect the Stone from Heat	Use trivets, hot pads, or coasters under hot objects to protect the stone from thermal damage. Do not place hot pots directly on stone countertops.
Avoid Abrasive Materials	Use soft cloths, microfiber towels, or soft sponges for cleaning. If necessary, use a soft-bristled brush to clean grout lines or other textured areas.
Immediate Spill Cleanup	Blot (don’t rub) spills with a soft cloth. For oils, use a paper towel or cloth to blot up excess liquid, and then clean the area with a mild, pH-neutral cleaner.
Prevent Scratching	Use cutting boards and trivets to protect stone surfaces from knives, utensils, and other sharp objects. Be mindful when placing heavy or abrasive items on stone surfaces.
Prevent Heavy Impacts	Avoid dropping heavy objects on the stone. If your stone surface is particularly prone to damage (e.g. marble or travertine), consider adding protective mats or rugs to areas of high traffic.
Regularly Inspect for Damage	Periodically check for any surface damage or imperfections. If you notice cracks, chips, or deep stains, consider calling a stone restoration professional to evaluate and address the issue.
Be Mindful of Cleaning Equipment	When using a vacuum, choose a soft brush attachment to prevent scratches. If mopping, use a damp mop instead of a soaking wet one to avoid excess moisture on the stone.
Polishing	Polish your stone surfaces occasionally using a stone-safe polish if you want to restore shine. Be careful not to overdo it, as frequent polishing can diminish the surface’s texture.
Protect from UV Damage	Some stones, particularly marble and onyx, can fade or discolor when exposed to UV rays for prolonged periods
Professional Cleaning & Sealing	All natural stone tiles must follow a strict maintenance schedule, with professional cleaning and penetrating sealer reapplication performed at intervals no longer than six (6) months. The stone must be sealed prior to use and maintained according to the sealer manufacturer’s instructions to ensure full protection and surface longevity.



