

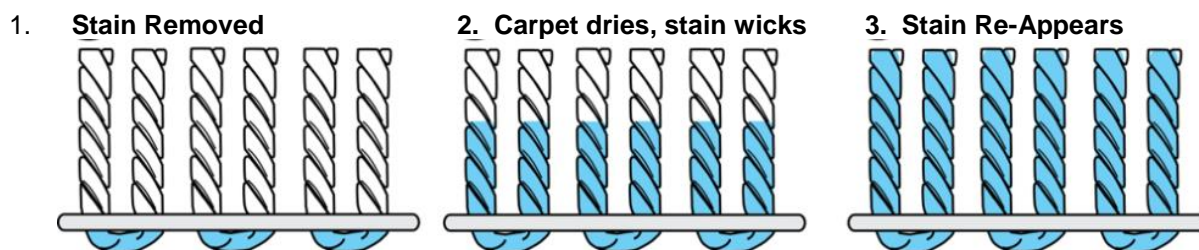
How to Stop Carpet Stains from Coming Back

Every carpet cleaner seems to have a story about how a stain in a carpet was removed, then mysteriously re-appeared days or even weeks later. The reappearance of a stain is most likely due to a phenomenon called “Wicking”.

This Technical Bulletin explains wicking, the causes and how to prevent it from happening.

Wicking: Stains that Just Keep Coming Back

After a spot or a stain has been removed, the carpet fiber begins to dry. This process happens from the top down on each carpet fiber. As the top dries, it draws up additional moisture along with any residual stain that might be embedded at the base of the fiber, in the pad, or even in the sub floor.



Wicking is a slow process and may take days to notice the re-appearance of the stain. Wicking occurs when there is additional residue related to the stain remaining in the carpet. Or, another contaminant deep in the carpet, pad, or subfloor wicks up to the surface and shows up as a spot.

When is wicking likely to occur?

Wicking usually occurs when a combination of conditions exist.

- Large volume spills: If a full copy of coffee was spilled, the stain can be removed from the surface, but it is unlikely or impossible that all of the coffee can be removed. So wicking is most likely to occur when there are large volumes of the staining agent in the carpet.
- High Humidity: The entire drying process after stain removal or cleaning is slowed by high humidity. This is an ideal situation for wicking to occur.
- Over Wetting Spots and Stains: Efforts to remove stubborn stains often result in excessive use of spotting chemicals and water. That means it takes longer to dry, setting up the conditions for wicking to occur.

Preventing or Stopping the Wicking Process:

Here are the steps to prevent wicking from occurring:

1. Dry the carpet fast: After stain removal or cleaning, getting the carpet dry as fast as possible is the key to stopping wicking. Place a fan on the area to dry the carpet and stop the wicking process. For stubborn wicking, consider using a hair dryer with heat to accelerate drying.
2. Use less spotting chemical: Try to minimize wetting the carpet. When using a spotting chemical, use a trigger sprayer to apply less rather than a flip top spout. Make the chemical work better by using a spotting brush or bone scraper to help the chemical penetrate the stain. Try to blot the stain out with an absorbent towel instead of extracting with water.
3. Control Humidity: While this is usually not possible, working in an air conditioned environment helps. If conducting full carpet extraction cleaning, try to select days where humidity is lower.

