

Wash

New technology
— and some
old home
remedies — can
ward off stains
and wrinkles

BY JOSEPH V. AMODIO
SPECIAL TO NEWSDAY

Let's hope Mom isn't reading this. I recently wore my suit while eating a juicy, ketchup-dripping hamburger. I smeared chocolate on the lapel. I — yes, that's right — wiped my nose on my sleeve. One night, I even slept in the thing. And I never took it to the dry cleaner.

Instead, I popped it in the washer, then the dryer. It's OK — it's one of the new Stafford suits, launched at JCPenney this spring. Lands' End has a women's version. And this month, The Limited debuted its L-3 suit separates — all made of the same fabric, which is washer and dryer safe. Or so they claimed. I was skeptical, but when I retrieved it from the dryer, dang, the suit was ready to have at it all over again. Even the crease in the pants looked crisp. I could hardly believe it. A wash-and-wear suit that you can

The new Stafford wash-and-tumble-dry suits (jacket, \$200; pants, \$100) come in gray, navy and tan. Available at JCPenney. (George Foreman also offers big-and-tall versions at Casual Male.)



Stain solutions

We've all heard the old wives' tale about club soda taking out stains (some folks swear by it — others say it's just water and can make a stain worse). So we surveyed some fashionable types about their quick fixes.

(Note: Home remedies are risky. All stains and fabrics are different.)

Hairspray: "I got a [ballpoint] pen mark on the front of my white dress blouse on the way to a presentation in Zurich. I

used hairspray in my overnight bag to make it disappear — lots of blotting and applying till it was gone."

— Laura Caderas, then manager for an international insurance company, now a mother and homemaker in Northport

Tip: Hairspray can leave stickiness or damage fabric. Other options: rubbing alcohol or nail polish remover.

Baby wipes: "I spilled coffee on my white cotton blouse on the way to my tenure hearing. Luckily, I had some Pampers'

Baby Wipes. I took one and wiped vigorously. By the time I got to work, the stain was gone!"

— Barbara Morrison, a high school teacher from Commaack
Tip: Blot, don't rub, which can spread a stain or damage fabric fibers.

Salt: "I was eating lobster in Cape Cod and spilled butter on my lap. I poured salt on the stain and enjoyed the rest of the meal. Salt absorbs greasy stains — or diminishes them. Sitting with a glob of salt may look a bit strange,

but get over it! Just brush it off when you're done."

— Ricci DeMartino, stylist with The Cloutier Agency in Los Angeles

Tip: You also can use baby powder or cornstarch.

Lemon juice: "I found an old Brooks Brothers madras jacket with a tea or coffee stain. I dabbed it with lemon juice and let sit in the sun for 30 minutes. Then rinsed and tried it again. By the second time, the stain was gone. Our mom would do this all the time to brighten cotton

Wear



NEWSDAY PHOTO / BILL DAVIS

Sometimes the smartest move (like when you've got a super-tough stain, delicate fabric or pricey outfit) is to get help from the pros, such as Wayne Edelman, owner of Meurice Garment Care in Manhasset.

Actually wash. Tumble dry. And wear. Without embarrassment.

The line is as functional as it is fashionable, says Offer Gilboa, chief executive of Bagir Ltd., the Israeli-based firm that developed the suits.

We've worn this before

Wash-and-wear suits have come around before — itchy, cratchy, all-poly versions that ripped dry and bore the look and feel of cardboard. These new babies, which hit U.S. stores in the past year, are made of a wool-polyester-Lycra blend.

Bagir vice president David Bagir notes that they are the only suitmakers in the world with this technology, so they're all very hush-hush when it comes to explaining how the suit does what it does. The high-tech fabric has "crease recovery" and "crease resistance" — that is, servers remember where to stay

ties."

— Melissa Houtte, co-author of "Alligators, Old Mink and New Money"

Be careful. Items left in the store too long will fade.

"I recently cut my foot on a flip-flop, and didn't realize it. I got blood on a rug, then I just spit on the rug, then I dabbed with a clean, white rag, and the stain came up."

— Ricci DeMartino

It's enzymes at work. Also, dab a bit of liquid detergent enzymes (noted on label).

— JOSEPH V. AMODIO

flat, where to stay folded — while the wool offers the drape, feel and breathability of regular suits. And, according to Bagir, in lab tests (presumably ones more serious than my own) they survived 30 washings and looked similar to suits that underwent 30 dry cleanings.

If only everything cleaned up so easily. It seems like more and more tags on clothes say, "Dry Clean Only." Those bills rack up.

"I think some manufacturers buy those tags in bulk and stick 'em on anything," says Wayne Edelman, owner of Meurice Garment Care, a well-known dry cleaner in Manhasset. "Sometimes we'll see it on a regular cotton shirt."

So, what can I tackle on my own, and what's best left to the pros? Edelman offers some Laundry 101 tips: Cotton business shirts and most polyester can generally take regular washing, he says; but silk, acetate, lined garments or anything not colorfast should be dry-cleaned.

Dry cleaners also can't be beat when it comes to "invisible stains." Edelman's squad of spotters and pressers wield brushes, irons, swabs and steam hoses, but perhaps most intriguing is the black light, which high-end joints like his use to reveal the subtlety of stains. (A splash of champagne may be invisible to the naked eye, but the sugars can later caramelize and turn brown.)

"I think this is rust from an iron," says expert spotter Samuel Romero, eyeing a faint orange blotch on a blouse. A few drops of a chemical called Rust Go . . . and the stain disappears.

"What we do is a mix of modern technology and Old World craftsmanship," says Edelman.

It's also wetter than you might expect.

Not really dry

"Dry cleaning isn't really dry," Edelman says. "We wash clothes, but not in water. We use chemicals like perc [perchloroethylene] and hydrocarbon."

Clothes get washed and dried in the same oversize machine, scanned again for persistent spots, then pressed and packaged.

Consider switching dry cleaners, he says, if they don't listen to details (no hangers, please), or if your clothes smell like they've come from the cleaners (a sign they may not be purifying their chemical



No dry cleaning is required with the new L3 suit separates (blazers, \$178; pants, \$90; skirts, \$68). Available at The Limited. (For similar styles, also try the Lands' End Commuter line, available in the company's catalog. For a copy, call 800-963-4816 or go to landsend.com.)

Portable problem-solvers

In the spirit of always being prepared, a number of companies make portable products that are easy to stash in a purse or briefcase for those inevitable misfortunes. Darren Ransdell, set designer and prop stylist for Cloutier in Los Angeles, says he always carries a travel-size dispenser of Goo Gone, which removes lipstick in a flash. It's also great on vinyl handbags, he says.

He also likes Tide To Go, a stain-removal pen, but cautions that you have to read labels carefully. Some on-the-spot spot removers contain bleach, which can ruin clothes if left on too long.

Tip: Test colorfastness by dabbing cleaner on an inconspicuous area (an inside seam) to see if fabric dye changes or bleeds. — JOSEPH V. AMODIO



solvents but using the same dirty stuff over and over).

So much to consider.

But it beats the alternative — hauling my suits down to the river and slapping them on a rock.