

CLEAN
by
DESIGN



Choosing a
Greener Way
to Care for
Your Clothes

We all want to take good care of our clothes, but many of the “recommended” methods of cleaning can be harmful to the environment and our own health. Here is a helpful guide for choosing the cleaning option that is best for you, your clothes, and the planet.

TRULY GREEN

Wash at Home with Professional Results

Many of your clothes that say “dry clean only” can actually be spot treated and washed by hand or by using the gentle wash cycle at home. For home care instructions and eco-friendly detergents, see The Laundress at www.thelaundress.com. You can also take your hand-washed clothes to a dry cleaner for professional pressing only.

Professional Wet Cleaning

Wet cleaning uses water and non toxic solvents to get clothes clean without producing hazardous waste or releasing dangerous gases. Wet cleaning also uses water and electricity very efficiently, making it much preferred to dry cleaning. Also, it leaves no toxic residue on clothes.

Liquid Carbon Dioxide Cleaning

This method uses pressurized carbon dioxide as a solvent to clean clothes. While carbon dioxide is a greenhouse gas, the gas used in this process is recycled and does not escape to the environment or contribute to global warming. No toxic residue is left on clothes.

Finding a “truly green” cleaner in your area is easier than you think. For an online directory of wet cleaners and carbon dioxide cleaners in your area, see No Dry Clean at www.nodryclean.com.

NOT REALLY GREEN

Liquid Carbon Dioxide Cleaning with Solvair Method

The Solvair process supplements carbon dioxide cleaning with toxic glycol ether as a solvent. Although advertised as a “green” liquid carbon dioxide cleaning method, the added chemical makes the process decidedly not green.

Silicone-Based Solvents

Sold under the trade name D5, or GreenEarth, this method replaces the traditional dry cleaning chemicals with a still-harmful silicone-based solvent called siloxane. This chemical does not easily break down in the environment and has been linked to uterine cancer in animals. Production of D5 also requires chlorine, which can generate extremely toxic chemicals called dioxins during manufacture.

Petroleum-Based Solvents

These solvents, though often and misleadingly referred to as “organic,” are volatile organic compounds (VOCs) derived from petroleum. These solvents go by names such as Stoddard, DF-2000, PureDry, EcoSolve, and Shell Solution 140 HT. The organic claim is misleading in that it merely refers to the fact that the synthetic solvents are carbon-based.

AVOID

Conventional Dry Cleaning with Perchloroethylene (PERC)

PERC is a chemical linked to liver and kidney damage and cancer. It can also cause dizziness, headaches, nausea, and skin and respiratory problems. Residue of toxic PERC can be left on your clothing at concerning levels.



For more information about garment care and NRDC's revolutionary Clean by Design effort to green the fashion industry, visit www.nrdc.org/cleanbydesign. And for more Smarter Living consumer tips, visit www.nrdc.org/living.