

# Maintenance and cleaning recommendations Intercarpet

## 1. Introduction: Every carpet gets dirty

Carpets consist of piles which are fixed in the ground fabric. The pile itself consists either of loops or of cut pile threads or a combination of these. The design of carpets may differ considerably. The pile can be flat or irregular but also high or low. Some carpets have a loose pile structure while others have piles with a very high density. With some carpets dirt is more easily absorbed between the fibres than with others. Every carpet will eventually become dirty through use and light-coloured carpets obviously show the dirt more easily than dark-coloured ones. This booklet provides maintenance recommendations and tips to prevent staining. Follow this advice and you will enjoy your Intercarpet carpet all the longer.

## 2. Staining: How to prevent it

The answer is simple: by making sure that the carpet is not exposed to dirt. This can be achieved best with a good 'dirt trough', which is a zone in which the dirt from the shoes is absorbed when coming in from outside. 80% of the soil brought into a home is tracked in on the soles of shoes. A good dirt trough works in two ways: it has both a brushing and a moisture-absorbing effect. A coconut mat, for example, will brush the rough dirt off your shoes but does not have a moisture-absorbing effect. Especially with bad weather it is wise to add a moisture-absorbing (cotton) mat to the existing dirt trough, because it is moisture in particular that causes visible staining. This also applies to transitions from hard floors to carpets.

## 3. Maintenance: How and when

Any dirt ending up in the carpet despite the dirt trough will have to be removed. **First of all by good daily care.** The correct removal of stains is also important in this respect. In the long-term, periodic maintenance will be needed. Each of these aspects is dealt with below.

### 3.1 Daily care

Regular and thorough vacuuming is the best maintenance recommendation. Dirt will be prevented from bedding in and between the fibres of the pile and can still be easily removed. It is logical that the most frequently used parts of the carpet (such as the entrance, the traffic lanes and the floor where the seats are) require extra care. Regular vacuuming will also lead to better preservation of the structure of your carpet.

The best results are obtained with a vacuum cleaner with a rotating, electrically powered brush. Such a brush consists of a horizontal cylinder equipped with spiral shaped brush hairs. If your vacuum cleaner has a fixed brush, vacuum with steady movements so that the vacuum cleaner will be able to suck up the dirt.

#### **Basic rules:**

- vacuum each carpet from the beginning regularly,
- replace the dust bag in time because when it is full the suction power of the vacuum cleaner will decrease,
- if necessary, use a small suction nozzle for those places which are most intensively used. Thorough vacuuming will prevent unnecessary deterioration of your carpet.

### 3.2 Stains: the correct treatment

Old stains are more difficult to remove than new ones. **So it is important that a stain is dealt with immediately.** However, take the time to treat the stain properly so it will not become permanent.

**'Dry' dirt can best be left dry and thoroughly vacuumed.**

#### **What to do with spills:**

As soon as a stain is made, the following steps must be taken first of all:

- Use a spoon to shovel up as much as possible of the spill. Start at the outside of the stain and proceed towards the centre.
- Dab the remainder carefully with absorbent material (kitchen roll, toilet paper, tissue etc.) until the area completely dry. **Do not scrub!** Scrubbing can cause pile distortion (use white absorbent material to avert smudges).
- Water soluble stains:  
Treat the stain with a clean cloth or sponge moistened with lukewarm water or, **even better, with mineral water.** Work from the edges of the spill to the centre, to prevent the spill from spreading. Then absorb again with uncoloured absorbent material (**do not scrub**). Repeat this until the moisture has dissipated. Then pat the carpet dry and bring back the structure to its original position. 90% of all domestic stains can be removed in this way. Faint residual stains caused by coffee or tea will gradually disappear under the influence of light (see follow-up treatment residual stains).
- Greasy stains (gravy, fat sauces etc.):  
Gently scrape up with a rounded spoon. Then make sure that the spill is absorbed as well as possible and no longer comes off. You will then have to moisten the stain lightly with lukewarm water. Apply sparingly a fat emulsifying agent. Allow it to soak in for several minutes. Moisten the stain again with lukewarm water (or mineral water) and allow to absorb thoroughly. Repeat this until the stain has dissolved. Provide follow-up treatment with cleansing agent (*see follow-up treatment residual stains*).
- Candle-grease or coagulated fats:  
Gather (crumble) the solid materials as much as possible to prevent running. Cover the grease stain with colourless absorbing paper. Use an iron at  $\pm 60^{\circ}\text{C}$  and carefully iron across the paper, which will cause the grease to be absorbed. Repeat this action (take a clean piece of paper each time) until no more grease is absorbed. If necessary, provide follow-up treatment (*see greasy stains*).

#### **Follow-up treatment residual stains:**

Has the first treatment been done with care? Now lightly dab or sprinkle the stain with lukewarm water. Apply sparingly the cleansing agent from the stains table at the back of this brochure. Again remember to pre-test all cleaning agents (*see general tips*). Allow to work for a couple of minutes. Pat the stain dry. Moisten again and pat dry again. Repeat this until all the soap residue has disappeared. Finally, pat the stain dry and put the structure of the carpet back to its original position.

#### **General tips**

- When removing stains, always remember to work from the outside towards the inside to prevent the stain from spreading. **(Wool must never be rubbed but dabbed; rubbing causes the stain to become matted and the fibres distorted).**
- Some stains require much time and a lot of absorbent material. Never rush things and remember that if at first you do not succeed, try again.
- Before using chemicals to treat stains it is wise to carry out a test first. Pre-test any spot removal agent in an inconspicuous area to make certain that the solution will not damage the fibre or the dye. You will then be sure that the remedy is not worse than the disease. Do not be fooled by so-called universal remedies, (they do not exist). Some remedies contain optical brighteners, which are actually fluorescent dyes that brighten the colours of the fibre.

- The use of **mineral water instead of tap water** will lead to better absorption of colorants.
- Residual stains caused by natural colorants (such as coffee and tea) should gradually disappear under the influence of light.
- Make sure that the moistened spot of the carpet is properly patted dry and covered with a moisture towel as the last part of the treatment; it will minimise the risk of rings.
- Chemical damage caused by bleaching agents, rust, urine etc. cannot or can hardly be removed. Most of these, will actually dye the fibres almost immediately.

### 3.3 Periodic care

Despite regular vacuuming, your carpet may after some time get dirty. Do not wait too long before taking measures. The dirtier the carpet, the more difficult it is to clean it.

Sometimes the dirt is limited to only one part of the carpet so that only the dirty part needs to be cleaned. If you decide to do this yourself, choose the option with the least possible risks, such as:

#### *Removal agents of powder*

Vacuum thoroughly the part that needs cleaning. Then spread the powder evenly or use a clean (synthetic) brush to rub it in. After the indicated drying time remove the powder thoroughly with a (brush) vacuum cleaner (powder is less suitable for wool and cotton).

#### *Shampoo / dry foam*

Vacuum the part to be treated thoroughly. Apply the foam evenly and rub into the carpet with a clean (synthetic) brush. After crystallizing, vacuum the carpet thoroughly to remove the shampoo (any remaining shampoo may become sticky and result in the carpet quickly becoming dirty again). Use only cleansing agents specifically formulated for carpets.

### 3.4 Complete cleaning: a job for the specialist

The specialist will adapt the cleaning method to the material, the way the carpet has been laid, the sub floor and the local circumstances, such as available drying time etc.

Proper cleaning with the available professional equipment can only be carried out by people with the required skills. The result of the cleaning will depend entirely on the method of cleaning. Deep cleaning the carpet is recommended at least once every 12 to 18 months.

#### **Water extraction**

Of all known cleaning methods water extraction will - provided it is performed properly - give the best results. The great advantage of this method is that practically no residue of the cleansing agents used stays behind in the carpet (which tend to hold dirt). This method does have one disadvantage, though: it is a job for real professionals\* only.

Complete cleaning involves paying attention to the following points:

- The carpet backing must not get wet during cleaning. The water has to be suctioned out with great force.
- Carpet cleansing agents must have a weak acid or neutral reaction (pH value 6 or 7) and must not contain any optical brighteners. Strong alkaline agents may, especially with wool, lead to colour or material problems.
  - they should be insensitive to hard water
  - they should be able to be rinsed easily.

## Finally

- Always first try with lukewarm water or mineral water.
- Carpets must never be rubbed but dabbed; rubbing causes the stain to become matted and the fibres distorted
- Moving (especially heavy) furniture may damage the carpet. Scraping doors over the carpet will of course lead to damaged spots.
- Make sure (especially during the winter months) that the relative humidity in the room does not drop below 50%. This will prevent static charging and will benefit both your carpet and your furniture.