



ATHENA AFTERCARE



We are
EXPERTS
in natural stone
restoration and
maintenance



Athena Stonecare are leading stone restoration professionals in London and the Home Counties. We take great pride in ensuring that your natural stone elegantly endures.

The ongoing care of your stone is important to us and so we have developed a suite of advice and guidance on how to maintain the finish of your stone. This is distributed through stone suppliers across the UK and is available to anyone who works with natural stone too.

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SEALING AND PROTECTING

| All stone, no matter what type and where it is in your home, will need to be protected. This will help to prevent staining, extend the lifespan and enhance the natural colour of the stone. Protection of stone can be broken down into impregnating and surface sealants.

Impregnating sealants penetrate the capillaries of the stone and protect from within. They can leave the stone with a natural or colour-enhanced appearance, but always with the stone surface exposed.

Surface sealants form a physical barrier between the stone and the environment. Modern sealants are either wax or polymer-based, which can achieve matt, satin or gloss finishes to the stone. Such sealants however cannot be applied outdoors or in wet areas as they are affected by moisture. They are also ineffective if applied to a polished surface as they cannot penetrate the surface sufficiently to bond.





HOW LONG WILL THE SEALANT OR IMPREGNATOR LAST?

| Contrary to popular belief, impregnating sealants themselves don't degrade over time. The pores and capillaries that were originally sealed will remain so, however abrasion caused by foot-traffic will create and expose new pores and capillaries which will require additional sealant. Usually, the more people or pets in the property the more frequently the protection will need to be reapplied.

Surface sealants on the other hand are designed to be a sacrificial layer, to protect the stone surface from the external environment. This means that liquid spillages and abrasion will impact the sealant and not the stone surface. These sealants will also be impacted by repeated cleaning regimes.


We suggest following our maintenance tips and advice to prolong this protection.

CARING FOR YOUR STONE FLOORS

| Applying and using the correct cleaning methods and products will help reduce the frequency of Athena Stonecare restoration and cleaning services.

We recommend:

- Installing professional quality internal and external matting at all entrances to decrease the amount of dirt and abrasive materials coming into contact with your stone floor.
- Asking guests to remove footwear. This is another great way to preserve your natural stone. Shoes can carry material that will scratch your natural stone.
- The use of a long hair swiffer mop and silicone molt-net spray combination for daily maintenance. This method will remove pet hair, dirt, dust and sand from the surface of the floor. It is much quicker and more effective than vacuuming, without the risk of scratching the stone surfaces.
- Investing in a good quality Kentucky Mop and Ladybug Bucket set for cleaning floors. Good quality equipment is an investment in both money and time.
- Using only stone-safe pH neutral stone cleaners – if in doubt check the label or ask your Athena Stonecare operative.
- The use of a small wet vacuum, as this is a great way to extract dirty mopping solution before it dries back into the surface of the stone.
- Investing in good quality felt pads or silicone coasters for the feet of chairs and furniture sitting on stone floors. This is a very sensible way to avoid scratches and scuffs.
- For floors such as travertine, slate, or terracotta, that have been finished with a surface wax, a periodic reapplication of diluted liquid wax will help maintain the protective layer.
- For rough textured and riven stone, along with anti-slip porcelain tiles, investing in a small scrubber-dryer machine. This will allow for a deeper clean of these uneven surfaces where mopping presents a real challenge.



PLEASE AVOID:

- | The use of steam cleaners; these are not designed to clean large areas as the microfibre cleaning pads will get clogged up with dirt very quickly, reducing their effectiveness. For floors sealed with a topical seal or wax, steam will reduce the lifespan of this seal.
- | Over-wetting a floor by mopping too frequently as this will have the same detrimental effect as steam cleaning on your natural stone.
- | Allowing waste water from mopping and cleaning to sit on your stone floor. This will leave the dirty solution to dry back into the pores and capillaries of the stone and grout.
- | Using harsh cleaning chemicals. Strong alkaline or acidic cleaners degrade impregnating and surface sealants as well as damaging stone surfaces.

CARING FOR STONE IN YOUR BATHROOM

| Make sure your bathroom is the one room in your house that you can really relax in by following our top tips.

We recommend:

- Cleaning vanity tops regularly using only pH neutral stone cleaners – if in doubt check the label or give us a call.
- Using alcohol to clean your windows and mirrors, as it will produce the same results as glass-specific cleaners without the risk of damaging your stone
- Investing in a cupboard, coaster or tray for your bottles and cosmetics, to avoid the temptation of putting them down on a stone surface.
- Keeping an eye on grout and particularly silicone throughout the bathroom. If it looks worn or loose then consider replacement, as water that gets behind the stone can cause damage beyond repair.
- Cleaning your shower and bath area daily. The easiest and most effective way is to spray the walls and floor of the stall with a stone-safe cleaner, then squeegee down after everybody in the home has taken a shower for the day. This will stop hard water deposits on the surface of the stone.
- Ventilating your bathroom as much as possible. Inadequate ventilation can cause stone surfaces to suffer from moisture damage and even mould and mildew growth.
- For dark coloured stone, periodically applying a colour enhancing impregnator will not only help protect your stone but will enrich the colour and keep the surface looking good for as long as possible.

PLEASE AVOID:

- | Cleaning areas of your bathroom with harsh chemicals as over spray or spillage could damage your stone. For example, many glass and metal cleaners will contain acid, so check the ingredient list before spraying near your natural stone. It only takes a small amount of damage to require an expensive restoration. The pH of a product is rarely advertised, but often citric acid, lactic acid or similar ingredients will be published.
- | Placing and leaving wet cosmetic or perfume bottles directly on your stone surface.
- | Using any limescale removers, mould removers or soap scum removers on polished stone unless the label specifically states they are 'stone-safe'. The chemical composition is likely to be too strong and will etch the stone surface.
- | Scrubbing the surface of your stone vanity tops, shower walls or bathroom floors with any rough textured scouring pads, as these could scratch the surface of the stone.
- | Using bleach or toilet cleaner in a liberal fashion that is likely to splash onto floors unless you have completely protected surrounding stone.
- | Letting metal bathroom accessories (toilet brush holder, toilet paper stand, etc.) sit directly on the stone floor. Moisture, even from condensation, will pool around the bases and can cause unsightly and difficult-to-remove rust marks to the stone.



CARING FOR WORKTOPS

| It is extremely important, if you've chosen polished marble or limestone for your kitchen worktop or island, that you apply due diligence to its maintenance. We recommend Fila Refresh as a daily cleaner as it not only cleans but enhances the level of protection of sealants. This will reduce the formation of limescale and mineral deposits from hard water, as well as leaving a microfilm on the surface that can give a small amount of protection from spills that could etch the surface.

If you have a love for cooking with citrus or have young children eating at a marble table, it is a great idea to consider installing a non-permanent physical barrier. We often advise clients to get a bespoke cut piece of toughened glass to sit on the surface of their stone table or worktop. This will stop acids from food, beverages and condiments from coming into contact with the stone surface, without losing the aesthetic appeal of gorgeous natural stone.

The glass can also be removed at any time and the stone surface will be intact.

GRANITE, QUARTZ AND AGGLOMERATE STONES:

These robust stones, can stand the test of time in your kitchen if looked after appropriately:

We recommend:

- Using only a stone-specific pH neutral cleaner, such as Fila Brio, to clean your kitchen counter regularly.
- Cleaning spills up immediately but only by blotting.
- Spraying dried-on stains with a pH neutral cleaner, leaving for 5 minutes to moisten and soften the stain, then scrubbing with a soft pad.
- Keeping oils, vinegar and any other bottles of liquid used for cooking away from your stone countertop. Prolonged exposure to leaks and spills that cause staining can be very difficult to remove.
- Regularly treating the surface with Fila Refresh to clean and enhance the stone, which leaves a trace film to protect from chemical spills.



PLEASE AVOID:

- | Allowing spills to sit on your stone countertop. Natural stone is porous, and the deeper the spill seeps into the stone, the more difficult it will be to remove.
- | Using any green or brown scouring pads to clean spills that have dried on or penetrated the stone. These pads contain silicon carbide grits that will scratch even the toughest granite. You can safely use the sponges lined with a silvery net, or other plastic scouring pads.
- | DIY oven cleaning kits containing very strong chemical degreasers which can etch surfaces and even bleach the colour of Quartz worktops. If using these kits, don't leave the bags filled with chemicals on the worktop without a barrier beneath in case of leakage.

WHEN TO CALL IN A SPECIALIST

| We always discuss maintenance programmes with clients from the very first visit in order that we can help to keep their natural stone looking stunning. Whilst the cleaning methods and preventative measures outlined will help to increase the longevity of your stone, investing in a regular maintenance visit will reduce the need for more costly restoration treatments in the future.

There are some instances when it is necessary to call in an expert promptly and we have outlined a just a few of these:

LIPPAGE OR UNEVEN TILES

| Poorly installed tiles can result in lippage which is the term used to describe an uneven level at a grout joint. Some degree of lippage is to be expected even if quality craftsmen are used for the installation. For stone that are set unevenly, Athena Stonecare offers a grinding service to rectify this. Not only does it improve the aesthetic appearance but will remove any potential trip hazard and prevent the accumulation of dirt and grime along the edges of the stone. For polished floors, diamond resurfacing and re-polishing of scratched and tired floors cannot be undertaken thoroughly if the tiles show more than 0.5-1mm of lippage. If this is the case, we suggest that the floor is ground flat first to give the best possible outcome.

DULLING

| Polished natural stone including marble, travertine and limestone, will over time lose its shine. Although proper cleaning and maintenance will slow this process, it is always inevitable, especially with the softer stones such as marble. We can offer a range of services, from grinding and re-polishing to deep cleaning and sealing, that can help return your natural stone to its former beauty.

PITTING

| This is commonly found in travertine but can occur in all natural stone due to its composition. Pits can be caused by over-wetting stone surfaces or by using inappropriate cleaning solutions or methods. Pits can also increase in size over time. Athena Stonecare can fill these pits with a specialist filler and then grind and finish your stone to a honed or polished finish.



ETCHING

| This is caused by acid exposure to stones containing calcium carbonate such as marble, limestone and travertine. Acid is not confined to cleaning products. Many foods, beverages and condiments are acidic, as are bathroom cosmetics. Etch marks cannot be cleaned away by wiping or scrubbing. They may look like stains but are in fact surface corrosion. This is particularly noticeable on polished stone. If the marks are large or unsightly, Athena Stonecare can carry out a survey and quote to re-surface or polish the affected area and restore the original appearance of your stone.

WATER MARKS, RINGS OR STREAKS

| These are often seen in bathrooms, when water has been left to run down a shower wall, or on worktops, where a wet glass has been left on a surface. Tap water isn't pure, and so its pH is never exactly neutral. Prolonged exposure of even the weakest of acids, often combined with the detrimental effects of hard water, will damage the stone surface. Once the water has evaporated minerals are left behind which can leave unsightly and hard to remove deposits. Athena Stonecare can help remove this kind of damage using specialist grinding tools and diamond abrasives to restore the stone to its original condition.

OUR STORY

Natural stone is an investment and we are committed to ensuring that its beauty endures. Athena Stonecare offer professional services to restore and maintain the finish of natural stone floors, walls and worktops.

We specialise in grinding, resurfacing, polishing and cleaning marble, limestone, travertine, granite and all types of natural stone.

The passion and expertise of our Founder, Dave Cranfield, has seen Athena Stonecare grow to be one of the leading providers of natural stone care. With a fully trained team of stone restoration experts we continue to grow and adapt, using the latest advancements in stone care technology to ensure we always deliver an exceptional service.

CONTACT

Please visit www.athenastonecare.co.uk/services for a full overview of the services that we offer.

If you would like to purchase any of the products that we recommend for maintaining your natural stone, please visit www.athenastonecare.co.uk/maintenance.





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