

Stainless Steel Product Care and Cleaning

Stainless steel is a low-carbon steel that contains at least 10 percent chromium. The addition of chromium gives the steel its unique corrosion-resisting properties. Most of Mardeco's stainless steel products are fabricated from type 304 stainless steel, which contains 18 percent chromium and 8 percent nickel. Mardeco uses it because it is extremely durable, resists corrosion, stands up to many chemicals, and is easy to fabricate.

Stainless steels are very resistant to rust, however this does not mean that they are impervious to it. Stainless steel must be kept clean and free from contaminants.

Frequent cleaning with mild soap and water or glass cleaner and a cotton cloth is required. Sometimes stainless steel products will develop corrosion or discoloration due to environmental and installation conditions. The following is a list of common conditions that cause corrosion or discoloration of stainless steel and should be avoided:

- Chloride containing cleansers – this includes bleach and any bleach containing Cleaners
- Muriatic acid (hydrochloric acid) – commonly used to clean up after tile/concrete Installation.
- Concentrated soap residue – chemical additives will cause discoloration and some dried soaps actually look like rust
- Water with high iron content – can leave a rusty residue, especially if allowed to drip continuously
- Contact with iron materials – including steel wool, machining chips, and iron residue/dust from installation or cleaning of other steel products
- Trapped moisture between the product and another object – rubber mats, metal cans of soaps or cleaners
- Salts – contain chlorides

Any discoloration or corrosion should be removed as soon as possible, or permanent discoloration and pitting of the surface could occur. Usually, the product can be restored to its original condition. Most discoloration can be removed with a mild cleanser (Ajax, Bon Ami, etc.) or stainless steel cleaner (Revere Ware Stainless Steel Cleaner, Goddard's Stainless Steel Cleaner, etc.) and a Scotchbrite pad. The surface should then be thoroughly rinsed with clear water. With proper maintenance, stainless steel will maintain its luster and appearance indefinitely.

My stainless steel is rusty? What do I do?

The following is a guide to help you chose a cleaning method that best fits the finish and the product in question.

Cleaning method	Applicable finishes	Notes
Naval jelly – available at hardware, marine and automotive supply stores	Bright polished and satin finishes	Follow directions on side of bottle. Must be rinsed well with water. Tends to brighten surface so should use on entire product. This is an acid based product and safety precautions on product must be followed. Does not work as well on rougher finishes.
Mild abrasives – Bon Ami, BarKeepers Friend – available at hardware, discount and grocery stores	Satin finishes	Do not use any product containing bleach or other chlorides. Put mild abrasive on soft wet cloth. Rub evenly over entire surface of affected item. Rinse well and wipe dry.

Once the discoloration is removed and the environmental condition eliminated, the metal and finish should be as good as it was from the factory. If the environmental conditions cannot be removed (i.e., chlorine in the air in a pool locker room), the item should be cleaned often and rinsed with clear water to prevent permanent damage to the stainless steel. If items are not regularly cleaned, pits may develop and the item’s surface may be permanently damaged.

For further information on stainless steel, please contact your local Mardeco distributor.

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