

SILK (Above-The-Floor)

WHAT IS SILK?

Silk is a protein fiber that is extruded by the silk worm when constructing its cocoon. With individual strands sometimes over a mile in length, silk is the only natural **filament fiber** used in the manufacturing of fabric.

COLOR CHANGES ARE COMMON

Most silk has a high propensity to fade in sunlight (both direct and indirect). Sunlight also degrades the fiber and can cause severe weakening. Below is an example of a typical “raw silk” fabric.



White silks tend to undergo a natural yellowing with age. This color change is sometimes referred to as a “**natural patina**”, (how’s that for marketing?). Unfortunately, this change can be accelerated by exposure to light and the new color is not always welcome.

ALKALINE CHEMICALS SHOULD BE AVOIDED!

Although silk is somewhat resistant to acid, silk can be **easily harmed by alkaline chemicals**. As with all protein fibers, chlorine bleach will completely dissolve silk.

Urine, which turns to an alkaline with age, can also be damaging to silk and should be removed or neutralized as quickly as possible in order to prevent long-term damage.

CLEANABILITY

Contrary to what many people think, silk is one of **the most cleanable fabrics available**. Most silks can be either wet or dry-cleaned, however, testing is a must, especially if the fabric contains surface finishes or multiple colors. Moiré silk, for example, can **only** be dry-cleaned.

SPOT CLEANING CAN BE DIFFICULT

While cleaning an entire silk sofa may not present a problem, spotting the same sofa can be very challenging. This is largely due to the **ringing problems** associated with silk.

Sericin, or “silk gum”, is a major contributor to the ringing problems. The sericin is drawn to and dries at the outer edges of the spotted area, usually leaving a dark colored ring. This problem can be avoided by feathering “seam-to-seam” around the spot.

CARE OF SILK

It is extremely important to reverse cushions on a regular basis so that any fading or yellowing that may occur will do so in a more even manner. The client can no longer “save the good side” for company, since this will only accentuate the fading or yellowing problems.

When spotting with chemicals the area should be “feathered” to prevent possible ringing.

Carpet beetles are very fond of silk and can cause unsightly damage. Timely cleanings can prevent these tiny pests from becoming a big problem.

ON THE BRIGHT SIDE

Silk is very durable and can be enjoyed for many years when cared for properly. The soft hand and **luster** of silk have always been popular, but have never been completely duplicated.

Topical treatments are very beneficial because they can minimize the absorbency and the chances for ringing.

**AS WITH ALL FABRICS AND FINISHES...
ALWAYS TEST CHEMICALS AND/OR
PROCEDURES FIRST IN AN
INCONSPICUOUS PLACE.**