



Dry Carpet Cleaning vs Steam Cleaning



Even if you take great pride in keeping your home or place of business clean, your carpet will eventually need to be professionally cleaned. Dust and allergens will build up in your carpet over time and it is difficult to avoid accidental stains.

Domestic carpet cleaners are ineffective at removing stains and debris from the deeper layers of carpet. To give your carpet a thorough clean, a commercial carpet cleaning service is required. But which type of cleaning service should you use — dry carpet cleaning or steam cleaning?

Each method has certain advantages and disadvantages. To help you decide on a carpet cleaning technique, this article will explain how each method works then highlight the pros and cons.

What is Steam Carpet Cleaning?



Despite the name, steam cleaning doesn't actually use steam. It uses a carpet cleaning method called hot water extraction. A carpet cleaning machine pushes hot water into the carpet then immediately removes it, extracting dissolved dirt and debris. Cleaning detergents can be added to the hot water to make it more effective at dislodging stubborn stains and debris.

Smaller steam cleaning units plug directly into a building's power supply and can be moved from room to room. Larger commercial operations often use steam cleaning vehicles, passing hoses into the building.

Carpets may need to be preconditioned with an alkaline agent before being cleaned, to assist in the removal of stubborn stains. The solution is sprayed onto the carpet and lightly scrubbed with a brush. It is then rinsed out and the carpet should have its pH neutralized before steam cleaning begins.

Pros of steam cleaning:

1. **There are many experienced providers of steam cleaning**

Because steam cleaning has been in use for many years, there are more experienced providers offering the service. Many of these companies are reliable, reputable and knowledgeable. By using one of these experienced companies, you know that your carpets will be cleaned professionally, efficiently and thoroughly.

2. **There are fewer chemicals involved**

Most commercial steam cleaning companies use commonly found detergents to clean carpets. There are no unusual or potentially toxic chemicals being used.

3. **You can perform green cleaning with a steam cleaner**

Some providers offer a green cleaning service, where common household substances like white vinegar and pure soap are used to perform the carpet cleaning. These substances are 100% natural and completely biodegradable.

4. **You can do it yourself!**

It is very easy to rent a small steam cleaning machine and clean your carpets yourself. While you may not get results as effective as you would with a commercial cleaner — your carpets will still look great. If you attempt to perform dry carpet cleaning yourself, mistakes can easily be made, leading to permanent damage to your carpets or exposure to hazardous chemicals.

Cons of steam cleaning:

1. **The carpets will be wet**

After steam cleaning, your carpets will be wet for anywhere between 1 to 12 hours (longer if you perform it yourself). The precise time it takes for your carpets to dry will depend on the temperature, humidity and sun exposure inside your property. While you can still walk on your carpets during this time, it can be inconvenient for busy private residences or businesses.

2. **Steam cleaning can remove manufacturer-installed stain protection**

Certain types of stain protection will be removed when exposed to water or detergents. One of the most common forms of stain protection that is removed when exposed to water is Scotchgard™. You may have to reapply some form of carpet protection to your carpets after they are cleaned.

3. **Some stains require multiple applications**

Pet stains and chemical stains can be very difficult for steam carpet cleaning to remove. Multiple applications may be required.

4. **Steam cleaning may be unsuitable for older carpets**

If your property has older jute-backed carpets or carpets with natural fibers, steam cleaning can cause the backing to shrink. This may result in wrinkles appearing on the carpet.

5. **Stains may reoccur while drying**

If your carpet stains were caused by an aggressive mold, mildew or fungus, it might reoccur while drying. To ensure this does not happen, the carpet should be dried as quickly as possible by performing the cleaning during the day, heating the building, opening windows to let a breeze enter and using fans.

What is Dry Carpet Cleaning?



Dry carpet cleaning refers to “very low moisture” (VLM) carpet cleaning systems. Typically, a slightly moist absorbent compound is deposited evenly over the carpet. It may be pushed into the carpet pile for deeper cleaning. The compound absorbs stains in the carpet and dirt.

After a short period, the chemical compound is vacuumed up or picked up with special pads, leaving the carpet immediately dry. The chemical compound works by attaching itself to oily dirt particles, making it easier for the vacuum or pads to pick them up.

Dry carpet cleaning took a giant leap forward in the 1990s when scientists developed polymers that could encapsulate soil particles. When dry cleaning techniques were previously used, if any of the chemical compounds were left in the carpet, the dirt they contained would eventually reabsorb into the carpet.

The polymers can crystallize the dry carpet cleaning detergents, helping to ensure they were all picked up by the vacuum cleaner.

Pros of dry carpet cleaning:

1. **Almost no drying time**

Carpets can be used immediately after the cleaning process has been completed — important for busy homes or businesses.

2. **Simple and fast to perform**

It is fairly straight-forward to clean a carpet using this technique, however care must be taken to apply the chemical cleaners correctly.

Cons of dry carpet cleaning:

1. **The chemicals used can be harsh**

Some dry cleaning processes use strong chemicals. These chemicals may cause an offensive odor in a property.

2. **Not a deep clean**

Dry carpet cleaning alone cannot penetrate into the deepest layers of the carpet like hot water extraction can, but when used in conjunction with an Encapsulation chemical it can get right down to the depths of the carpet.

3. **The cleaning compound can be left in the carpet**

It is easy to accidentally leave some of the cleaning compound in the carpet.