

Consumer Guide to Carpet Cleaning

The carpet cleaning industry is one of the few industries in New Zealand that is not regulated, and also has a very low barrier to entry in that anyone can call himself a “professional” without any basis for that claim. Yet these are people who come into your home and use cleaning chemicals, which can be dangerous if you do not have the knowledge of how to use them properly.

When you open the phone book, you really can't tell who the great cleaners are, or the ones you would NEVER EVER want to use. The “great” cleaners work hard to distinguish themselves apart from the fly-by-night companies who use unsafe cleaning practices, hard-sell tactics and sometimes have very unsavoury employees.

Your carpet, rugs and upholstery act as a “filter” in your home for your indoor air. Their fibres “grab” particulates and contaminants and hold them. But like any filter, it needs to be cleaned because when it gets full it cannot grab anything else ... and every time you step or sit on a “full” filter you release contaminants back into the air.

Cleaning your carpet is key to a healthy indoor environment, and the EPA's guidelines for cleaning vary from every four months to every eighteen depending on the number of people and pets in the home, as well as other concerns from allergic sensitivities to how dusty the air is in your neighbourhood to whether anyone in the home smokes. A good carpet cleaning professional can not only evaluate your particular needs but fulfil those needs for your home and your family.

The question now is how to find that “right” professional ... and we have the information to help you do just that.

5 MISTAKES TO AVOID WHEN CHOOSING A CARPET CLEANER

MISTAKE#1: Choosing a carpet cleaner based on equipment alone. No question, your carpet cleaner needs good equipment. BUT he also needs something else – he needs to have an extensive knowledge on carpet.

MISTAKE #2: Choosing a carpet cleaner based on low price. Low price could be a problem in several ways:
This can be the “bait” that attracts your phone call, but once the cleaner gets into your home, he pressures you into a much more expensive job
The low price charged is because of lack of experience and skill to provide a thorough service
Or He is a “jack of all trades” doing a bit of “this” and a bit of “that” replying on doing many different jobs to produce a liveable income, not a specialist in one particular industry.

MISTAKE #3: Choosing a carpet cleaner based on a single telephone call. Instead, invite the person to your home and ask for a specific written quotation. Then you’ll know exactly what the carpet cleaner recommends – and you will not be the victim of high-pressure tactics when the technician steps into your living room.

To give you an idea of how we estimate the cost of cleaning, here are the three things we consider.

First, the carpet type. Certain types of carpet are harder to clean than other types.

Secondly, the amount of soiling. Carpet that hasn’t been cleaned for ten years will take longer to clean than carpet that we cleaned within the last six months.

Third, the amount of furniture we have to move. If you move your furniture, you will save money.

MISTAKE #4: Choosing a carpet cleaner who doesn’t offer a money-back guarantee. Every carpet cleaning company should be fully accountable for their work. And, if you aren’t pleased with the job in every way, you shouldn’t have to pay for it.

MISTAKE #5: Choosing a carpet cleaner without getting comments from his other clients. Any carpet cleaner can say anything about his past jobs. And, sadly, some of what he says may not be true. Make sure you ask for references or read comments from current customers so you can depend on the carpet cleaner and his work.

4 COSTLY MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT CARPET CLEANING

MISCONCEPTION #1: You should wait as long as possible before cleaning your carpet.

Dirt is an abrasive-like sandpaper. Every time you step on your carpet, you grind dirt into the carpet fibres. This cuts your carpet, just as if you had used a knife. A dirty carpet will not last as long as a clean carpet, and while vacuuming helps – by itself, it is simply not enough. The longer you wait to have your carpet cleaned, the more damage you do to your carpet and the faster it wears out.

MISCONCEPTION #2 : The only reason to clean carpet is to remove dirt.

As you probably know, outdoor air contains pollens, fungus, bacteria, air pollution, cigarette smoke, car exhaust – and hundreds of other chemicals. When you come into your home, you carry those pollens, bacteria and chemicals in your hair and on your skin, clothing and shoes. Not surprisingly, all those chemicals and toxins wind up in your carpet and upholstery.

If you have allergies, asthma, emphysema or other breathing problems – one major source of your problem could be the pollens, fungus, smoke and chemicals in your carpet.

MISCONCEPTION #3: Cleaning your carpet strips out the natural oils from them.

This depends on the method that is being used and the chemicals that are used to clean your carpets. While some “splash and dash” carpet cleaners use cheap, harsh detergents, a reputable company will use products that keep the Ph levels your carpets require and are not only safe for your carpet, but safe for your children and pets too.

MISCONCEPTION #4: Having the latest and best equipment is all a company needs to clean your carpets properly.

Many companies have the “latest and greatest” equipment, however if they do not know how to use it correctly or understand carpet, there can be grave consequences. There may be a cleaner out there using a different product or method, however, being fully educated on his equipment and carpeting can produce a far superior clean.

The Wright Clean's method of cleaning is a circular dry foam method.

Circular Dry Foam

Source: Nationwide Consumer Testing By Richard Byrne

The best cleaning found by Nationwide Consumer Testing is the Circular Dry Foam system. They said, "Our research shows that the Circular Dry-Foam system with separate initial and finish vacuuming, really removes the dirt and keeps the carpet looking better, longer."

The Circular Dry-Foam system had a very high level of soil removal (92.3%) with little or no soap residue. They don't use harsh detergents which are oily or sticky. Carpets re-soiled in 12 to 16 months. Drying time was from 45 minutes to 2 1/2 hours with the average being 1 1/4 hours."

We use this method for several reasons – but first you need to understand, there are two different types of "dirt" you want removed from your carpets. The first is the dry dirt – this includes sand, grit, dirt, fluff, dander, pet fur, dust mites, moulds, pollens and fungus spores. This dry dirt can be removed by vacuuming however most residential vacuums aren't powerful enough to remove this deep down embedded dirt.

The second is washable dirt – this includes grease and oils, chemicals, toxins and cigarette smoke which typically settles on the surface of the carpets.

Once there has become enough of a build up on the surface, the dry dirt sticks to this making your carpets look dirty.

Traditional carpet cleaning methods pump massive amounts of water into the carpets to try to remove the deep down embedded dirt however, once moisture has hit this dry dirt, it soon becomes a thick muddy substance making it near impossible for even the most powerful truck mounted extraction systems to even attempt to remove this muck. While the top portion of the carpet may be clean, the thick muddy substance they couldn't remove sits at the base of the carpet which could cause damage to the backing of your carpet.

There are also so many horror stories we have heard about it taking a week for the carpets to dry and in some cases, the dampness created even more mould, fungus and mildew in the carpet.

Over-wetting the carpets can also cause the glue on the backing of the carpet to breakdown and this is what makes carpet "ripples" causing the carpet to stretch.

With the Circular Dry Foam Method, first we do a deep dry vacuum with our industrial strength vacuum to remove the deep down embedded dry dirt. Then we wash the washable dirt from the carpet – and because the vast majority of this is on the surface, we don't need to pump massive amounts of water into your carpets. While the carpet is damp once completed, this method has a quick drying time allowing you to get back to your normal routine.

This method is not suitable however for flooding, or extracting things like vomit or faeces that has soaked through to the base of the carpet. For this situation, we would recommend hot water extraction however care must be taken when pursuing this option.

4 STEPS TO A FRESH, CLEAN, HEALTHY CARPET

If you're thinking about having your carpets cleaned, I encourage you to follow these four steps:

STEP #1: Make a commitment to yourself to get your carpets cleaned.

The longer they remain dirty, the sooner they'll wear out. Industry testing shows that you can have up to one full pound of dirt in a square foot of carpet before it begins to look dirty. This dirt is abrasive and wears down the fibres and substantially shortens the life. Another necessity of regular cleaning is to remove the contaminants besides the "dirt" that gets trapped in your carpet's fibres. The longer you wait to clean, the longer you have to breathe all the pollen, fungus, pet odours, dust mites, and chemicals that hide in your carpet.

STEP #2: List your objectives.

Is the health of your indoor environment highest on your list? Do you want only the dirt removed – or are you concerned about removing other contaminants (bacteria, pollen, dust mites, mould spores)? Do you want to work with an honest, reputable company – or are you willing to risk working with the company that offers you the lowest price – knowing that the company might not be in business tomorrow and might not be safe to let into your home?

STEP #3: Ask questions.

The way you learn about a company is to ask specific questions and listen carefully to the answers. Here are six questions to ask a carpet cleaner to help you feel more confident about the one that you choose:

- 1) What method of carpet cleaning do you use?
- 2) How often should I get my carpets cleaned?
- 3) What training have you had in cleaning carpets?
- 4) Do you guarantee your work?
- 5) Who will be coming to my home to clean my carpet?
- 6) What kind of chemicals do you use?
- 7) Do you have any written endorsements of clients or businesses that I can read?

STEP #4: Once you're satisfied that you're working with an honest, competent professional, invite him to your home and ask for a specific quotation, backed by a guarantee!

A written quotation gives you the assurance that you know exactly what your job will cost – no surprises!

The purpose behind these steps is to empower you with the information you need to make a wise decision in choosing a carpet cleaning professional. The proper care of the carpet and upholstery in your home is essential to creating a healthy indoor environment for you and your family, and this decision should never be taken lightly. **These guidelines will help you to locate an ethical and excellent carpet cleaner in your town.**

I hope you find the information valuable, and if you have any questions please email me at thewrightclean@yahoo.com or call me on (07) 544-2235.