

All About Shirts

Professional cleaners successfully launder hundreds of shirts every day and they are very good at it.

But, like all things, shirts can outlive their useful life or exhibit other problems. Whether your shirts are store bought, custom-made, expensive, or inexpensive, the problems below identify and explain those that are often encountered.

“Do you charge everyone the same price to launder a shirt?”

Prices are generally based upon the costs of doing business, the expertise, and the time it takes to complete the requested service requirements of an individual item.

“You shrunk my shirt.”

Typically, when a shirt is made, the manufacturer has allowed for two to three percent shrinkage by cutting fabric a little larger. Finished dimensions that are less than a pre-determined allowance may become too tight in the neck, too short in the sleeve length, and too tight around the middle.

When this happens it is usually the result of poorly stabilized fabric or other elements of construction. There is very little a professional cleaner can do that will cause excessive shrinkage.

“I can’t wear my favourite shirt anymore.”

The average life expectancy of a shirt is about 35–50 washes, or roughly two years. But even this will fluctuate depending on the amount of abrasion and strain placed on the shirt during wear, the fibre content, and how the shirt is constructed. Sometimes they simply wear out.

“Do you really have a person whose only job is to crack buttons?”

No. But professional cleaners will quickly check every shirt for cracked or missing buttons and replace them before they are returned to you.

If damaged buttons are missed point them out to the cleaner and they should take care of them for you.

“It’s a brand new shirt and the colour has run all over it! You must have washed it incorrectly.”

The ACCC’s Care Labelling Rule states that all components in a garment must withstand the recommended care procedures. If one or more dyes in a multi-colour shirt are not colourfast, bleeding will occur whether you wash it at home or if is professionally cleaned.

Significant dye failure is attributable to poor manufacturing and should be returned to the retailer.

“The collar and cuffs are full of wrinkles!”

Puckering and excess fabric in the collar and cuffs is often the result of the interfacing shrinking leaving an overabundance of outer fabric. Professional cleaners can't reverse this situation. The manufacturer is responsible for using interfacing that is compatible with the shirt fabric.

“What happened to my pinstripes?”

At first glance it may look like colour loss from bleach, yet a close examination will reveal that only the colour pinstripe yarns are missing, leaving a skeletal framework of the white yarns. Here's why: the colour yarns were dyed with fibre-reactive or sulphur-based dyes that degrade with repeated laundering. As the shirt nears its life expectancy, the colour yarns can simply wash away.

“Why are the underarm stains still there?”

Most damage in the underarm area is directly related to consumer use. Perspiration, if allowed to stay in a shirt, will eventually stain and weaken the fabric. Aluminium chlorides, a key ingredient found in antiperspirants, also weaken the area under the arms. Frequent laundering after wear may minimize this type of damage.

“What are these grey stains on my sleeve seams?”

Discoloration or grey or shiny specks on the shirt seams, collar and cuffs, or placket occurs when the shirt manufacturer uses excessive and improperly applied adhesive to fuse interfacings with the outer fabric. In most cases, prevention of this damage is not possible since it cannot be identified prior to laundering.

ALL ABOUT SHIR **T**