

# SDA PRODUCT FACT SHEET

## LAUNDRY

## Laundry Detergents

Products that contain a surfactant and other ingredients to clean fabrics in the wash.

### CLEANING ADVICE FROM THE EXPERTS!

Welcome to the ever-changing world of laundry detergents! Consumers will find an array of choices available today when they shop for laundry detergents. Some of today's choices include: general-purpose, combination and High Efficiency detergents. These detergents and laundry aides, like bleach and fabric softener, work in harmony to contribute to the effectiveness of your laundry!

Whatever your product choice, we hope this fact sheet helps you stay up-to-date on laundry detergents and their proper use!

### READ THE LABEL!



Garment care labels provide the manufacturers' instructions for cleaning the garment. For the best cleaning performance, read and follow both garment care labels and product label directions.

**Colorfast Test** Colorfast means that dyes used in the fabric will not run when they're laundered. Unless the garment reads "Dry Clean Only," this test can be done. Place the edge of an inner seam or hem on a paper towel. Then saturate with cool water and press down on the fabric. See if any color bleeds onto the paper towel. If it doesn't, you may have saved yourself a trip to the dry cleaner. If it does, then the garment may need to be dry cleaned.

## PRODUCTS

Laundry detergents come in many forms, each having its own benefits. Select the form that best meets your specific cleaning needs.

- **General-Purpose Detergents:** Full-strength detergents that can be used with many types of fabrics/textiles.
- **Light-Duty Detergents:** These detergents can be used when washing fabrics by hand or in your washing machine. They're used primarily for delicate fabrics, such as those requiring special care or lightly-soiled items; ideal for hand washing baby clothes.

### General-Purpose (■) and Light-Duty (□) Detergents

**High Efficiency (HE) Detergents** – Detergents (both liquid and powder forms) designed for use in both front and top-loading HE washers. These products are formulated for use in low-water volume. ■

**Liquid Detergents** – Especially effective on food and greasy and oily soils. They are also good for pretreating spots and stains prior to washing. ■ □

**Powder Detergents** – Ideal for general wash loads. Powders are especially effective at lifting out clay and ground-in dirt, making them ideal for children's play clothes. ■ □

**Ultra Detergents** – Concentrated detergents are available in liquid or powder forms. They come in smaller packages, yet are designed to offer the same cleaning power as similar products in larger packages. You'll need less ultra detergent than with an unconcentrated product, so follow label instructions and use the measuring cap or scoop that comes with the product. ■

**Single-Use Detergents** – Compacted and/or concentrated powder, liquid, or tablet detergents that come in unit-dose sizes for measuring accuracy and laundering convenience. ■

**Fragrance or Dye-Free Detergents** – Many laundry products are now fragrance-free and/or dye-free. Read the labels for details. ■

**Soap Bars** – Formed detergent bars are generally made from tallow or a combination of tallow and cocoa (coconut oil). They were the precursors of the chip and powder forms of detergent. ■

**Combination Detergents** – One detergent formulated to do two jobs. Look for: Liquid or powder detergents with built-in fabric softeners; powder detergents with color-safe bleach; liquid detergents with bleach alternative. ■

## INGREDIENTS

Ingredients may be listed on product packaging. The following are common ingredients used in laundry detergents. Not all products contain all ingredients.

**Surfactants/Cleaning Agents** – Improve the wetting ability of water, loosen and remove soil with the aid of wash action, then emulsify, solubilize, or suspend soils in the wash solution until soils are washed away.

**Builders** – Enhance or "build" the cleaning efficiency of the surfactant by inactivating water hardness minerals.

**Enzymes** – Break down complex stains and soils, including protein-based stains (grass and blood) and starch-based stains common to many foods. Enzymes can also improve the appearance and feel of fabrics.

**Polymers** – Help to capture and hold soils and dyes, sending them down the drain to avoid re-depositing on washed fabrics.

**Oxygen Bleach** – A type of bleach that *maintains* color and whiteness and may be used with all fabrics.

**Softeners** – Reduce fabric friction or static electricity, and help to provide a soft, fluffy appearance for fabrics.

**Stabilizers** – Maintain high-sudsing function, where suds level is an important indicator of cleaning power. They also help maintain stability of the product and its shelf life, especially the enzymes and oxygen bleach.

**Preservatives** – Substances used to protect against natural effects of product aging, e.g., decay, discoloration, oxidation, and bacterial attack. They can also protect color and fragrance.

**Solvents** – Prevent separation or deterioration of ingredients in liquid products.

**Fragrances** – Provide pleasant scent to fabrics, plus cover the odors of the detergent and the soils in the washing solution.

**Colorants** – Added to lend individuality to the product, or dramatize a special additive contributing to product performance.



The Soap and Detergent Association  
WEB SITE: [www.cleaning101.com](http://www.cleaning101.com)



The Soap and Detergent Association of Canada  
WEB SITE: [www.healthycleaning101.org](http://www.healthycleaning101.org)

## SAFETY FIRST

- Keep all detergent products out of the reach of children during use and storage.
- Read and follow all instructions on all products prior to use.
- Keep products in their original, labeled containers.
- Do not use emptied detergent containers for storage of any other materials, particularly those intended for human consumption.
- Thoroughly wash any utensils used in dispensing or measuring of products.
- Wash hands thoroughly after product usage.
- **DO NOT COMBINE LAUNDRY DETERGENTS** with ammonia or other household cleaning agents. Some chemical mixtures may release irritating gases.
- In case of emergency, call the number on the product label or the U.S. Poison Control Center's nationwide, toll-free hotline at: **1-800-222-1222**. To locate a provincial Poison Control Center in Canada, visit [www.healthycleaning101.org/english/safety.html](http://www.healthycleaning101.org/english/safety.html).

## DISPOSAL

Household laundry detergents are formulated to go “down the drain” and to be treated in sewage treatment or septic tank-tile field systems. Products that require special handling in disposal will list proper disposal procedures on the label. Most household laundry products can be safely disposed of down the drain (flushing with water) or in the trash. Good rules to follow for proper disposal of household laundry products are:

- Use up the product or give unused portions to a friend or neighbor – or –
- Dispose of unused portions “down the drain” or in the manner suggested on the package.
- When disposing of empty containers, check with your local recycling coordinator to see what type of plastic or paperboard containers they accept.

## DIRECTIONS FOR USE

- For best results, always follow the manufacturer's care label sewn in the garment, and sort laundry accordingly.
- Follow directions on the product label for the appropriate amount of product to use.
- If you have any questions, call the 800 number listed on the product label.

## FABRIC CARE SYMBOLS

For successful cleaning performance, it's important to read and follow fabric care labels before washing garments. Care labels may feature symbols in addition to words. Below are some basic fabric care symbols. For more about fabric care symbols, visit: [www.cleaning101.com/laundry/fabriclabels.html](http://www.cleaning101.com/laundry/fabriclabels.html).



Washing  
Instructions



Bleaching  
Instructions



Drying  
Instructions

## SMART CLEANING: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

**Q:** *What water temperature should I use in my wash cycle?*

**A:** As always, follow garment care labels and detergent labels. Use **cold water** for fine fabrics, sensitive colors, and items that could shrink. Cold water lessens the amount of wrinkling and helps keep colors from fading. Use **warm water** for moderately soiled clothes – natural and man-made fabrics. Use **hot water** on durable whites, badly-soiled, permanent press, and colorfast items. *Never use hot water on fine washables.*

**Q:** *What are care labels and why are they important?*

**A:** Garments can look the same, but need very different care. North American standards require that the garment manufacturer attach a permanent label with directions for care. It must remain legible during the useful life of the garment, and should be easy to locate.

Care labels should provide accurate information for cleaning garments and other fine fabrics. Always read and follow garment care and product labels before washing, drying, or dry cleaning.

**Q:** *Should care labels ever be removed?*

**A:** Garments are required to have care labels attached, so you can review them before purchasing a garment. If you remove the label after purchasing, you will not have the full information regarding proper care or warnings.

**Q:** *How can I prevent my dark colors from fading?*

**A:** There are several ways to reduce color fading:

- Before treating any garment, always read and follow care label instructions.
- Sort your laundry and keep dark colors together.
- Turn garments inside out before washing and drying. This reduces abrasion of the fabric and prevents the dulling effect of pilling.
- Don't overload the washer or dryer. Clothes should move freely to prevent detergents from depositing on the fabrics.
- Cold water is best for protecting darks.
- Don't over dry; remove clothes when slightly damp.
- To help prevent fading when drying clothes outdoors, leave them inside out.

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