

Are Yellow Stains On Your Pillow a Warning Sign?

Yellow stains appearing on your white pillows are disheartening. They are unsightly. They also may have health implications. Your head rests on the stained pillow, and your mouth, nose, and eyes are in close contact with the stains.



Causes Of Yellow Stains On Pillows

Pillows usually turn yellow from a combination of factors—often related to moisture or humidity.

- **Sweat.** Most people sweat while sleeping—a little or a lot. The moisture eventually passes through the pillowcase and stains the pillows yellow.
- **Drool.** Many people also drool while sleeping. Saliva mixes with sweat to grow yellow stains.
- **Body Oils.** The human body secretes oils to keep the skin supple and lubricated. The oils from your head add to the mixture, causing yellow stains.

- **Cosmetics.** Beauty products, skin creams, aftershave, etc., easily rub off onto pillows to cause yellow stains.
- **Wet Hair.** Moisture from wet hair is absorbed into the pillow. Some hair products rub off onto the pillow. All contribute to yellow pillow stains.
- **Humidity.** High bedroom humidity increases the speed of the staining and promotes mold and mildew growth.

Yellow Stains On Pillows Affect Your Health

Stained pillows don't appear to be a serious problem, but sensitive people could experience reactions to yellow pillow stains.

- **Allergic Reactions.** May be worse in the presence of mold, mildew, and dust mites.
- **Skin Irritations.** Dead skin and oils can cause rashes and acne.
- **Harmful Bacteria.** Moist environments promote bacterial survival.
- **Respiratory Problems.** Constantly inhaling a concentration of dust mites, bacteria, and mildew from the yellow stains makes existing respiratory problems worse.
- **Dust Mites.** Dust mites are everywhere in the house, but thrive in moist environments like pillow stains. They can trigger allergies and make asthma attacks worse.
- **Mold.** Heavy accumulations of moisture can cause mold growth. Mold aggravates asthma conditions and allergies.

Removing Yellow Stains From Your Pillow



Completely removing old set-in yellow stains may be impossible, but getting rid of most of the stain and lightening the pillow should be doable. *Read and follow the pillow-washing instructions.* Almost all pillows are machine washable, but some recommend hand washing.

Use one of these options as a pre-treatment.

- **Hydrogen Peroxide.** Mix one part hydrogen peroxide with 5 parts water.
- **Vinegar.** Mix one part vinegar with 3 parts water.
- **Baking Soda.** Make a paste using baking soda and water.
- **Commercial Stain Remover.** Follow the manufacturer's instructions.

Dry them in the clothes dryer or preferably in sunlight to take advantage of natural UV disinfection.

If the pillow can't be cleaned properly, consider replacing it with a new one. Many experts and manufacturers recommend washing pillows every 2 - 3 weeks and replacing them every 2 - 3 years. The Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America says that after 2 years of use, 10% of pillow weight is made up of dead dust mites and their feces.



Dust mites seen under a microscope. Invisible to the naked eye.

Preventing Yellow Stains On Pillows

Most people can't stop sweating and/or drooling while sleeping, but here are a few tips to help keep pillows stain-free.

- **Pillow Protector.** Use a zip-up hypoallergenic pillow protector under the pillowcase to protect against moisture, sweat, and oils. They are inexpensive and can be washed weekly to prevent any buildup.

- **Oil-Based Products.** Avoid applying any oil-based skin creams or hair products before going to bed.
- **Dry Your Hair.** Ensure your hair is completely dry before going to bed.
- **Remove Make-up.** Remove all makeup before going to bed.