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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Thursday, January 19, 1932

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "Laundering Wool Clothes," Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U.S.D.A.

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I have a letter here that I'd like to read you first thing this morning.

"Dear Aunt Sammy," says the letter. "What is the best way to keep wool garments clean--washing or dry cleaning? My Cousin Matilda bought a lovely green knitted suit last fall--an expensive suit that she was very proud of. When it became soiled, she tried to wash it and completely ruined it. It stretched way out of shape. The sleeves actually reached almost to the floor. The color ran, too. So I wonder if washing woolen clothes was safe."

I'm sorry about that green suit. My guess is that Cousin Matilda didn't wash it according to the rules. Of course, you can spoil knitted garments by treating them badly in the washtub. And once you've stretched them badly out of shape or made the color run, they'll probably never recover. Dry cleaning is safer unless you wash with care. But washing is less expensive and generally quite simple. Often you can do it so successfully that the clothes look practically new after their bath.

Before you begin the washing process, better do a little measuring for safety. Take the dimensions of knitted garments or any other woolen clothes that might shrink or stretch during laundering. Write down the length of the sleeves, width of waist, width across the shoulders, length of skirt, and so on. Keep these measurements until later when the garment is drying and may need to be pulled into shape. At this point, you can make it fit your measurement figures.

Now about the job of laundering. The first requirement for washing any wool garment is thick lukewarm soapsuds made from mild soap. Here's the way you make the soapsuds. You put some neutral soap chips or flakes in the bottom of your tub or wash bowl. Then, you run in a little very hot water, just enough to melt them. After that you add enough cold water to make the bath lukewarm. If you want to keep your wool clothes in the best condition, keep the temperature even. Lukewarm water for both washing and rinsing, and what Uncle Ebenezer would call "lukewarm air" for drying. That means, dry at room temperature, never in a very cold or a very hot place.

I think I've told you before how my neighbor makes homemade soap chips. But her thrifty idea is good enough to tell again. She saves the end of cakes of mild soap, used around the house, and when she has quite a supply, she runs them through the food chopper. The chips made this way she stores in cans or boxes all ready to use when she needs them. If you don't want to bother with chips, you can use



these odds and ends of soap to make soap jelly. Just cover with water and they'll melt in a day or two. This jelly, like the chips or flakes, is good for laundering any delicate clothes, either silks or woollens.

But to get back to the process of laundering. We've mentioned a lukewarm temperature and mild soap. Alkali, even in weak solutions, is bad for wool. Strong alkalis actually dissolve both wool and silk. Even washing soda or strongly alkaline soap often seriously injures these fabrics. Still another point is gentle handling. When wet, any wool fabric is especially sensitive to rubbing and to heat. Unless you're careful, that soft attractive wool dress may become hard, yellow and shrunken. Unless you're careful, that knitted sweater outfit may stretch way out of shape. So, thumbs down on any rubbing or wringing. Squeeze the dirt out. And when you're moving garments from the sudsy to the rinsing water, lift them carefully, holding them in a bundle in your two hands. Don't wring the garments just squeeze the moisture out very carefully. And be sure to get all the soap out by rinsing in several waters, all of the same temperature.

Rapid work counts, too, especially on colored clothes that may run. Soaking--that's absolutely taboo. Never let woollen clothes lie in water and soak, not even if your best friend has an exciting story to tell you over the telephone.

As for drying, of course you don't have to be told that most woollen clothes should not hang to dry. They should stretch out flat on a Turkish towel to dry where they can keep their shape. Lay them flat just in the size and shape you want them to be when they're dry. Measure if you're not sure. If the color seems likely to run, better lay a towel between the back and front of the garment. Of course, no wool garments should hang near the hot stove to dry, nor outdoors on the line where they might freeze in this weather.

Here are seven don'ts for washing woollens. You might pass them on to Cousin Matilda, so she won't spoil her next green suit.

1. Don't use either hot or cold water. Keep the temperature lukewarm in both washing and rinsing woollens.
2. Don't soak woollens. Wash as rapidly as possible.
3. Don't use strong washing powders or any alkaline compounds on woollens. Use mild soap in flake or jelly form.
4. Don't rub, wring or stretch woollens. Handle them gently.
5. Never boil woollens.
6. Never allow woollens in freeze or dry too near a fire.
7. Don't hang knitted woollens to dry. Stretch them flat in the right shape.

