

How to remove hydrochloride acid drip stains from tile?

Q. How can I remove drip stains caused by hydrochloride acid that was mixed 10:1 with water?? I was washing the walls and only left the acid mix on for no longer than 5 mins but the lower tiles have drip lines on them.

A. What is the tile is actually made of? The solution will depend on that.

The first step, regardless of the kind of tile, will be to neutralize the acid. Even a diluted, inorganic acid like hydrochloric acid can linger in micro-textures. A simple baking-soda-and-water neutralizing wipe won't fix the marks, but it will stop them from getting worse.

From here, the approach will depend on the tile type. If your tiles are porcelain or glazed ceramic, the acid most likely won't go through the glaze, but it may leave very shallow etch marks. These may respond well to an alkaline cleaner or, if needed, a gentle polishing compound. Use slow, circular motions and a clean microfiber cloth. Be patient and don't use abrasives.

If the tiles are natural stone, especially calcium-based stones like marble, limestone, or travertine, five minutes is plenty of time for the acid to etch the surface. The drip marks you describe probably aren't residue on the tile but actual changes to the stone's texture and reflectivity. Granite usually behaves differently. Its minerals don't typically react to hydrochloric acid. Every once in a while, though, granite will contain minerals like calcite or dolomite that can be susceptible to etch damage. You won't be able to scrub discolorations caused by etch damage out. The finish will need to be restored, that is, honed and polished by a professional stone restoration contractor.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR Fred Hueston is the Chief Technical Director at [SurfaceCarePROS.com](https://surfacecarepros.com) and Director at [StoneForensics.com](https://stoneforensics.com). He is also the author of [Stone and Tile Restoration: The Manual](#), a comprehensive online manual for stone and tile restoration contractors. [[Learn more about Fred.](#)]

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