TENT CARE 101

HOW TO WASH A TENT

It's not as simple as throwing it into the washing machine. Do that, and you'll soon be shopping for a new tent, because machine washing –even on a gently cycle—will damage the fabric coatings, seam taping, mesh, etc. Tents, while miraculously tough when pitched in the wilds, are no match for a stainless steel cylinder filled with hot, soapy water and an agitator.

The good news is that tents don't have to be washed all that often. In fact you can probably go a couple years between washings, unless it gets smeared with mosquito blood or starts to smell like a wet dog. When that happens, here's what to do.

1) Pitch your tent in your yard on a nice warm, sunny day and remove all debris from inside. (pine needles, dog hair, Snickers wrappers).

2) Gather your supplies: a **garden hose**, a **big sponge**, a **soft scrub brush** (like you'd use with vegetables), a **bucket of water** and soap. (Nikwax Tech Wash is ideal, but you can also use **a squirt of liquid hand soap**) *do not use soap containing detergent such as dish washing liquid or laundry soap.

3) Using the sponge, simply scrub down all surfaces, inside, then out. You can use the brush for any stains or to really get into the corners.

4) Turn on the hose and thoroughly rinse the entire tent. Repeat until there's no more soapy residue.

5) Make sure it's staked down, and let it dry completely in the sun before packing.

6) The best way to tackle the fly is to spread it out on the grass and wash and rinse both sides, as described above. Then find a good place to hang it dry–a clothesline is best, but you can also drape it over a fence or a couple of lawn chairs.

How to Deodorize Tents

Once the tent is clean, mold and mildew odors may still be present. You can deodorize your tent with MiraZyme™ odor eliminator. MiraZyme is an all-natural blend of microbes. As soon as you mix MiraZyme with water, the microbes are "activated" and they begin consuming any odor-causing bacteria in your tent fabric.

We recommend the following for removing mold and mildew smells from tents:

Fill a tub with just enough water to submerge the tent.

For really stubborn odors add 1 oz. of MiraZyme for every gallon of water, for less stubborn odors add about a ½ oz. for every gallon of water. Mix well.

Unzip all zippers and open tent flaps.

Next, soak the tent in the MiraZyme mixture for no longer than 5 minutes. The idea is to saturate the tent with microbes so that they consume the odor-causing bacteria present. **Do not rinse** the tent because doing so may rinse the microbes away. **Do not apply heat** as heat may kill the microbes.

Ideally, you will soak, remove and allow to air dry. You will not notice a reduction in odor until the tent has air dried completely.

There are some additional tips worth noting as well:

1. MiraZyme is most effective immediately after it has been mixed with water since most of the microbes are still alive. As time progresses they consume themselves and the solution becomes less effective. Make sure that you are soaking the item immediately after mixing with water and you are not using an older mix or pre-mixed solution.
2. The longer the item is able to air dry, the longer the microbes are able to do their job. Heat will kill the microbes and rinsing will wash them away. Try your best to dry the tent in a cool environment out of direct sun light.
3. MiraZyme does not utilize any hazardous or harsh ingredients. However, you must take care when soaking tents. Many tents are treated with a polyurethane (PU) coating on the underside of the tent fly and on the tent floor to provide waterproofing. This coating is not permanent and it is common for PU coatings to break down and delaminate, especially if a tent has been soaking in water or is damp. To help prevent coatings from breaking down, do not soak the tent for longer than 5 minutes.

If you do notice that the coating is breaking down, there will also typically be a foul odor similar to vomit or urine present. This is a result of the failing polyurethane coating and is common in older tents. Unfortunately, this is a chemical reaction, and MiraZyme will not help as it only removes organic odors. There is a fix, however.

How to Remove PU Odors from Tents

Mold and mildew aren't always the culprits with foul-smelling tents. Many times tents stink because the polyurethane coating which is applied to the underside of the tent fly or inside of the tent floor is beginning to break down. Many people may notice a vomit smell in the tent or liken it to urine. It is actually a chemical reaction caused by the breakdown of urethane.

To treat these types of odors, we recommend the following:

Polyurethane breakdown odor (vomit or urine smell)

1. Ideally, you will need to remove the failing PU coating to put a stop to the bad smells.
2. Begin by filling a tub or container with enough warm water to submerge the item. Add about 5 drops of liquid soap.
3. Submerge the tent and soak for 2-3 hours. Remove the tent from the bath and gently scrub the polyurethane coating (typically applied to the underside of tent flies and the top side of tent floors) with a mixture of isopropyl alcohol, water and a couple of drops of soap. Keep a dish towel nearby to soak up excessive residue.
4. Once you've removed the old coating, you can apply a new PU coating using Tent Sure™. Apply a thin film of Tent Sure onto the tent floor (inside) or tent fly (underside). Allow 24 hours to dry.
5. Once dry sprinkle with baby or talcum powder to alleviate any initial tackiness.

How to Prevent Tent Odors

Now that your tent is smelling like roses, it's important that we keep it top condition. We recommend the following storage tips to prevent odors from returning:

1. Air dry your tent as soon as you get home from your trip.
2. Do not store tents that are damp or wet.
3. When storing tents, allow them to breathe.

By following the above recommendations, you can put an end to smelly tents, once and for all.

Seam Sealing

We recommend use of a sealer such as Kenyon Seam Sealer 3 or McNett Outdoor SeamGrip. Be sure to check directions on the side of container for specifics before beginning the seam sealing process.

Seam sealing should be done in a fully ventilated area. Set the tent up or lay the tent out flat. Taut seams allow for even application and penetration of the sealer.

Decide which seams need to be sealed. For example, seams that will be exposed to rain, runoff, or ground level water are a must for sealing, while seams on uncoated nylon or mesh panels won't need treatment. You won't need to seal the seams in the roof or the factory taped seams either. We recommend sealing both floor & fly seams and reinforcements.

Apply sealant to the inside and outside of all exposed seams. Draw or brush the sealant along the seam, spreading it evenly and liberally into all of the needle holes. Several thin layers will work better than

one thick layer. Allow 30 minutes to 1 hour for the sealant to completely dry before storing the tent. Twelve hours for SeamGrip®.

Storage

Make sure the tent is completely dry, then store loosely rolled, in a dry, cool place. To prevent dust from collecting on the tent, cover it with a cloth. This allows the nylon/polyester fabric to breathe.
Ideally, the tent poles should be stored in their fully assembled state. This reduces the tension on the shock cord, prolonging its life. We recommend that the tent bag be used only as a carry sack and not for storage.

General Tips:

- Use a ground cloth under the tent whenever possible. Trace the tent on the ground cloth and cut smaller than the tent footprint to avoid having it act as a water collector. Ground cloths are easier and less expensive to replace than torn tent floors.
- Try not to wear shoes inside your tent.
- Bring a small rug or mat to put inside the tent door to wipe off mud and catch sand.
- Sweep the tent floor daily to prevent damage from stones.
- Do not keep food inside the tent. Hungry critters will chew through the tent fabric in search of a snack.

Replacing Tent Pole Shock Cord

Important: Keep the pole sections in the proper order !!!

Required: A hank of 3mm shock cord (total pole lengths x 2/3)
Some good sticky tape for joining new cord to old cord or wire
Hemostat for clamping the stretched cord before cutting

1/8" (3mm) shock cord may be slightly larger than the original, so it may fit through better if joined with tape instead of a knot.

In terms of length, you'll probably be happy with about 2/3 of the pole length.
Therefore the total length of shock cord required is your total pole lengths x 2/3 plus a bit.

1. Measure the length of the pole, multiply this by 2/3, then lay out your shock cord beside a tape measure and mark this 2/3 length with a marker. DO NOT CUT THE CORD.
2. It's easier to pull the cord through the pole one way than it is the other. Start with the pole end that has a male connector.
3. If possible tape the new cord onto the old shock cord and use it to pull the new cord through…if not, tie to one pole end and work your way through to the other, using a length of wire. ***Be very careful to keep the pole sections in order.***
4. When all the way through, stretch the cord until you see the 2/3 mark, pull a bit further, then clamp the cord with a hemostat. Cut the cord at the mark, tie onto the pole end, remove the hemostat, insert the pole end and enjoy.