



# GreenNY

## Safer Garment Cleaning

Professional garment cleaning services allow us to ensure that our clothes are cleaned and cared for properly. However, traditional garment cleaning methods use hazardous chemicals, such as perchloroethylene (commonly known as PERC). As health concerns over the use of PERC have risen, so have new environmentally friendly cleaning methods. Use the guidance below to avoid PERC and choose a more environmentally friendly form of garment cleaning.

### 1. Avoid PERC

PERC is a solvent commonly used in dry cleaning operations that is classified by the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) as a probable carcinogen for humans. Garment cleaners that use PERC will have the white background notice posted in their store—see *sample notice to the right*. Even if a store uses PERC, they may also use other methods to clean garments, so ask them about alternatives.

### 2. Look for the following alternatives

There are a number of more environmentally friendly methods of cleaning that garment cleaners use. Look for the following hierarchy of options starting from the most environmentally friendly option:

#### A. Professional wet cleaning

This is a method of professionally cleaning garments, including those labeled as “dry clean only”, by using water, detergent, and sophisticated computer-controlled washers and dryers. A number of cleaners that use traditional dry cleaning methods use wet cleaning as well, so ask your cleaner if they have wet cleaning capabilities. [The New York State Pollution Prevention Institute has created a map](#) that lists cleaners known to have offered wet cleaning that you can use as a reference [note: the map may not capture all cleaners that offer wet cleaning in the State and you should confirm that a cleaner provides wet cleaning services before dropping your clothing off].

#### B. CO<sub>2</sub> cleaning

This is a method of professionally cleaning a garment that uses liquid carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) instead of other chemicals or solvents. As this is a new technology, there are not a lot of cleaners that use this technique, but it is worth inquiring with your cleaner if they don't provide wet cleaning services.

#### C. A DEC-approved alternative solvent

Many cleaners have made the switch from PERC to a DEC-approved alternative solvent. These solvents have lower toxicities than PERC. Cleaners that use a DEC-approved alternative solvent will have this green-backed notice posted in their store saying what solvents they use—see *sample notice to the left*.

You can find a list of DEC-approved alternative solvents on [DEC's website](#).

### 3. Look for less waste and recycle thin film plastic covers

Talk to your cleaner to see what steps they take to reduce the amount of waste they generate (such as using reusable garment bags and taking back hangers for reuse) and make sure to recycle the thin film wrapping that your clothes may come back in. Note: you can't put thin film plastic in your curbside recycling bin, but it can be taken back to most grocery or retail stores.

More information on thin film recycling is on [DEC's website](#).

New York State  
Department of Environmental Conservation

## NOTICE

**Garment cleaners that use PERC will post a notice with a white background.**

NEW YORK  
STATE OF  
OPPORTUNITY.  
Department of  
Environmental Conservation

New York State  
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## NOTICE

**Garment cleaners that use a DEC-approved solvent will post a notice with a green background.**

NEW YORK  
STATE OF  
OPPORTUNITY.  
Department of  
Environmental Conservation