

HOW TO BUY AND CARE FOR ACRYLIC KNITTED SWEATERS (38)

Acrylic is a synthetic fiber that is popular in knitted sweaters due to its similarity to wool. Acrylic fiber can be bulked to create the texture, feel and look of the softest wool fabrics. People who do hand knitting on sweaters and other fabrics frequently use acrylic yarn. Although similar in appearance to wool, acrylic differs significantly. Wool is sensitive to insect and moth damage, alkali, perspiration and chloride salts while acrylic is not. Wool is not easily washable while acrylic is. Izod is a manufacturer that uses acrylic in their manufacture of knitted sweaters.

LIMITATIONS

Acrylic knitwear is durable but has one significant problem. Acrylic knitwear is susceptible to stretching. Acrylic yarn and fabrics are stabilized in manufacture by a heat setting process. When improperly stabilized acrylic knitwear will stretch from the heat and tension in normal wear and routine cleaning procedures. Professional drycleaners have had severe problems cleaning acrylic knitwear due to its tendency to grow or stretch. Once the fabric stretches it can never be blocked into shape. Wetside staining such as coffee, tea, wine and soft drinks are relatively easy to remove from acrylic. Dryside staining such as vegetable oil, paint, nail polish and glue are very difficult to remove. Pilling is also a problem with acrylic as with other soft knitted fabrics.

IDENTIFYING ACRYLIC KNITWEAR

The acrylic knitted fabric can have several different names depending on the manufacturer. Acrylan, Creslon, Orlon and Zefran all denote acrylic yarn.

INSPECTION BEFORE BUYING

Examine the sweater carefully for distortion and stretching. Once a knitted acrylic sweater is distorted it can not be blocked into shape. Buy the right size since acrylic sweaters tend to stretch, not shrink. Avoid buying sweaters that show pilling since the condition becomes worse during wear and routine cleaning.

WASHING

Wash acrylic knitwear in net bags and wash on a gentle cycle. Use any mild detergent or color safe bleach for white fabrics. Dry in the laundry dryer on a warm cycle until 90% dry. This means that the areas of double thickness such as cuffs, collar and seams may feel damp. Block over a hanger by folding the garment in half length-wise. Do not hang knitted sweaters on a hanger from the shoulders since this will cause stretching and hanger marks. Use a warm iron only for removing wrinkles. Never use hot irons on acrylic yarn.

