

# Latex Decay

**G**lues such as latex are often used on the backings of rugs as an adhesive and in some cases to provide a non-slip feature to rugs. Adhesives are applied usually when rugs are tufted rather than knotted. Tufting is a less expensive and faster rug making technique and uses latex to hold the face yarns in place as well as give structure and strength to the rug's construction.

In many cases, such as rugs produced in India and China, a secondary backing is applied to cover the unsightly latex. Non-slip rubber finishes are applied to many "bast fiber" rugs such as sisal, jute, and sea grass to prevent the rug from sliding around and to protect the floors from the abrasiveness of the fiber.

Whatever the reason and purpose of the glue, rubber or latex is, they all break down over time.

## Understanding Latex Delamination

Latex quality varies from producer to producer, and you often don't know until the rug is put into use for some time. All adhesives will eventually breakdown with time, traffic, and exposure to the "elements" of a household, but quality adhesives will hold out significantly longer and with less apparent issues. However, most tufted rugs sold today use cheaper latex that can off-gas disagreeable odors. These cheaper latexes also tend to have fillers such as clay dust in them to make the latex heavier and even less expensive to use. Consequently, a powder starts to release from the back of the rug as the latex decays creating what can look like soil or dust.

## When to Repair Your Rug

- Dust created by delamination cannot be washed, vacuumed, or dusted out of the rug and it will start to lose the structural integrity the latex was providing. If your rug has a secondary backing it will also start to delaminate and show as bubbling or wrinkling on the back of the rug.
- If your rug is already exhibiting any of these signs of latex decay or delamination the issue requires a repair process of removing the old latex, then reapplying a new layer of latex and a new backing. Consult your ARCS Member cleaner to see if this is a service they provide.

**ARCS**  
ASSOCIATION OF RUG CARE SPECIALISTS



Rubber Backing



Tufted Delamination