

Q: How Can I Get Rid of Efflorescence?

A: The first step in removing efflorescence should be an attempt to identify the salts. If the salts are water soluble, the best removal method is with a dry brush. Rinsing with water may also be effective. Alternately, if the efflorescence is in small patches or limited areas, hand washing with a mild detergent and a stiff bristle brush will often prove sufficient.

In extreme cases, or where water alone does not remove the efflorescence, a mild solution of muriatic acid and water, usually one part muriatic acid (hydrochloric acid, HC1) to 12 parts water, can be used. Several mild individual applications are better than one overpowering dose. Care must be taken to thoroughly presoak the wall with clean water and, after the acid application, to thoroughly flush the wall of all remaining acids with clean water.

Now that the efflorescence has been cleaned from the walls, the efflorescent chain must be broken so that efflorescence does not return. The fact that we had efflorescence indicates that there are soluble alkali sulfates in the wall, and that the sulfates have migratory paths to the surface. All we can do now to prevent future efflorescence is to prevent moisture from entering the masonry and rendering the sulfates into a solution. So, the final step in this process is to seal the wall with a water-repellent primer/sealer such as SRK's Stucco Recover.

Efflorescence is a controllable condition that should not be a problem in modern masonry. Breaking the chain of conditions necessary for efflorescence can be done with good details, the correct materials and quality construction.