

## HOW TO ...

# Clean inflatable boats, protect RIB collars, tubes and sponsons, clean Hypalon and PVC inflatable boat fabric

Need to clean your RIB, dinghy or inflatable boat? Like all equipment and accessories on your boat, if you look after your boat then your boat will look after you. Your Hypalon or PVC inflation collars are expensive bits of kit. Finding time to keeping them clean, serviced and in good repair will ensure that they keep on giving you a good return on your investment, and don't let you down at the wrong time.

First, there is little point in working hard to make your inflatable boat look like new if your boat is in need of repair or requires other major work. Undertake any work needed, including repairing tears or punctures in your Hypalon or PVC fabric, re-gluing any peeling seam tapes or strake, D-rings, rubber mouldings, valve doubler rings or old repair patches. Advice on how to repair your inflatable boat and service or repair inflate/deflate valves is available at <https://www.ribstore.co.uk/advice/advice-and-information>. Repair kits and other materials can be purchased at <https://www.ribstore.co.uk>.

Sand and debris are bad news for inflatable boats so after each outing wash down your boat with a hosepipe, set at low pressure, ensuring that sand and debris is removed from the collar seams, deck/collar joints and transom joints etc. Whilst the collar or tubes are still wet apply a good quality inflatable boat wash, such as ToobShine - available here: <https://www.ribstore.co.uk/toobshine-rib-inflatable-boat-cleaner>

Apply any cleaner in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. Avoid household or automotive cleaners as these can contain ingredients that may leave residues on your collar fabric that may prevent UV protectors or glues from adhering properly in the future. Use a non-scratch cleaning cloth such as the 3M ScotchBrite Type T cleaning pad – available here <https://www.ribstore.co.uk/products/3m-scotch-brite-type-t-non-abrasive-cleaning-pad-white> – to work the fabric cleaner into the pores of the fabric. Use a soft nylon bristled brush to clean D-rings, strake mouldings etc. Leave your inflatable boat to dry.

Good quality inflatable boat cleaners remove some oxidation from Hypalon fabrics, and regular cleaning with an inflatable boat wash removes oxidation that has built up over a short period. Oxidation is a naturally occurring process and leaves your inflatable collar or tube fabric dull and with a 'milky' complexion. This is particularly apparent on Hypalon fabric collars or tubes that have highly pigmented colours, where they are regularly exposed to high levels of UV and a UV protector has not been routinely applied.

If your inflatable boat fabric shows signs of oxidation (go straight to section 6, if oxidation is not a problem for you) then you will need to roll out the big guns in the professional RIB and dinghy cleaner's armoury. Solvents will be needed to remove the heavy oxidation on Hypalon, use RIBstore Hypalon Cleaner Solvent available at <https://www.ribstore.co.uk/products/hypalon-solvent-cleaner-primer>. This product should be used with care, warning labels strictly followed and only used in a well-ventilated environment with no naked flames or potential sources of combustion.

Bear in mind that once you decide to use the solvent your inflatable collar or tubes will look like new and hence you will need to apply the solvent to the whole collar or tube to ensure an even finish. Before applying the solvent, mask-off rubbing strakes and any adjoining contrasting fabric or fittings. Use a soft, lint free cloth (have plenty of clean cloth to hand as this process will remove a lot of oxidation and dirt) and working on small areas at a time, using small circular motions, apply the solvent sparingly but working as quickly as possible to minimise evaporation. It is normal for the fabric colour to be left on the cloth after cleaning with the solvent.

Many people wash-down their boat but miss the really critical step of failing to apply inflatable boat fabric protector and conditioner. RIBstore has developed a high performance protector and conditioner especially for RIB and inflatable boat fabrics, called HypaTec – available here <https://www.ribstore.co.uk/hypatec-inflatable-boat-finish-conditioner-500ml-or-1-litre>. General or automotive protectors/conditioners should be avoided as most contain silicones, oils or waxes that do not stand-up to the harsh marine environment or to longer term UV exposure, and often lead to problems when repairs are needed in the future. Apply the marine protector in accordance with the manufacturers' instructions.