Tadelakt Sink Care & Repair Guide

Essential maintenance for long-lasting beauty

What is Tadelakt?

Tadelakt is a traditional Moroccan lime plaster used for centuries in riads, hammams, and palaces. The word *tadelakt* is a Moroccan term with both Amazigh (Berber) and Arabic roots, meaning "to rub in" or "to massage," referring to the polishing technique that gives the surface its distinctive waterproof sheen.

How It Works

When olive oil soap is applied to the lime surface, a chemical reaction occurs: the fatty acids in the soap combine with the calcium hydroxide in the lime to create *calcium stearate*, a water-resistant compound that seals the surface from within the plaster, not just on top.

IMPORTANT

Tadelakt is **water-resistant, not waterproof**. Only genuine soap made through saponification creates this reaction, raw olive oil will not work and may darken the plaster. Synthetic detergents will not create the calcium stearate bond. Regular soap maintenance is essential.

Maintenance Schedule

FREQUENCY	TASK
After each use	Rinse with water; wipe dry with a soft cloth
Monthly	Clean with diluted olive oil soap (1 tbsp per liter of warm water)
Every 3–6 months	Apply pure olive oil soap directly; massage in and buff with a soft cloth
Annually	Inspect for wear; re-polish if needed with olive oil soap treatment

What to Avoid

NEVER USE THESE ON TADELAKT

- Acidic substances (vinegar, lemon juice, citrus cleaners)
- Commercial bathroom cleaners (most contain acids or harsh chemicals)
- Abrasive scrubbers or scouring pads
- Synthetic detergents or dish soap (they strip the protective layer)

WHY

Lime is alkaline and reacts with acids, which etch the surface and destroy the seal. Synthetic detergents lack the fatty acids needed to maintain the calcium stearate layer.

About Olive Oil Soap

Black Soap (Savon Noir)

Traditional Moroccan soap made from olive oil and crushed black olives, saponified with potassium hydroxide (potash). Dark in color with a soft, gel-like texture. This is the **preferred choice** for tadelakt, as potassium-based soaps bond better with the lime surface.

Marseille Soap

French soap made through traditional hot saponification. Use only the **green (olive oil) variety**. The "72%" on the label refers to total vegetable oil content, not specifically olive oil. A good alternative if black soap is unavailable.

Repairing Chips, Cracks & Small Holes

> **NOTE:** hairline cracks are normal and part of tadelakt's character. They often heal on their own through natural crystallization. Only repair cracks that compromise water resistance or aesthetics.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Tadelakt powder (matching color)
- Water
- Olive oil soap (black soap preferred)
- Flexible spatula
- Polishing stone or river pebble

REPAIR STEPS

1. **Try re-compression first.** Dampen the area with diluted olive oil soap and rub firmly with a polishing stone in circular motions. This alone often closes hairline cracks.
2. **Prepare paste (if needed).** Mix tadelakt powder with water to a thick, toothpaste-like consistency.
3. **Clean & fill.** Remove loose material, dampen the area, press paste firmly into the crack or hole, and overfill slightly.
4. **Let set.** Allow to dry for several hours until firm but not fully cured.
5. **Polish.** Rub with polishing stone in circular motions; apply olive oil soap while polishing.
6. **Cure.** Keep dry for 24 hours, then resume normal use.

> **NOTE:** repaired areas may remain slightly visible, especially on darker colors. Tadelakt's natural variations help blend repairs over time.

Quick Troubleshooting

PROBLEM	SOLUTION
Water not beading	The seal has worn. Apply soap treatment 2–3 times, then finish with carnauba wax if it persists
Dull surface	Apply olive oil soap, massage in, buff with a soft cloth. A thin coat of carnauba wax restores depth and sheen
Chalky residue	Rinse with water; apply soap to restore sheen
Hard water stains	Gentle scrub with a soft brush and olive oil soap; never use vinegar
Dark spots when wet	Normal water absorption; the surface brightens when dry. Regular soap use evens it out

> **WAX** is the finishing step, not a substitute for soap. Soap rebuilds the seal; wax protects it and deepens the sheen. Apply carnauba wax after the soap has set, roughly once a year.

When to Call a Professional

- Large cracks (wider than 2 mm) or structural damage
- Water leaking through the surface
- Significant color fading, discoloration, or a rough or gritty texture after cleaning
- Extensive repair needed (more than small touch-ups)

REMEMBER

Tadelakt is a living material that develops character over time. Small variations in color and texture are part of its beauty, and temporary darkening when wet is completely normal. The surface will brighten as it dries. With proper care, your sink will provide decades of service while only becoming more beautiful with age.