



Care and Cleaning of Your Fine Jewelry

Fine jewelry will last longer with proper care. In addition to using caution and common sense when wearing jewelry, it is also important to make sure it is cleaned, repaired, shipped, and stored in the proper manner.

A regular professional cleaning once a year not only keeps your jewelry looking its best, but it also ensures that a trained professional takes a look at it, allowing for the earliest possible detection of wear or damage. Between professional cleanings, however, there are some things you can do to keep your jewelry clean.

Wearing

Caring for your jewelry starts with proper wear. That means knowing when to put your jewelry on – and when to take it off.

Put jewelry on after applying makeup, perfume and hairspray. Also, handle gems and pearls as little as possible, since skin oil can build up over time and dull their appearance.

Remove your jewelry if you're going to do any manual labor, including housework. A bracelet can be easily broken or bent if it catches on a hook. Gems, even diamonds, can chip or crack if they're knocked against a hard surface. Another danger comes from the harsh solvents used in cleaning, which are not good for any kind of jewelry and particularly harmful to pearls.

If you wear earrings, it's usually best to remove them while you're having your hair styled. That way the stylist's comb won't catch them. And, never wear pearl earrings or necklaces while you're having your hair colored. Some of the coloring agents contain alcohol and other chemicals that can mar the luster of the pearls.

If you're right-handed, think about wearing a bracelet or watch on your left wrist since you don't use it as much as your right. The opposite applies if you're left-handed.

Diamonds

For diamonds, use a soft-bristled, non-metallic brush and a mild ammonia and water solution. Gently scrub away any grime, especially around the prongs or setting where buildup is likely. Even a clean

looking diamond often has a thin layer of skin oil and will shine better after a cleaning. Avoid touching the diamond as much as possible.

Gemstones

For gemstones, soak the piece in a bowl of warm, soapy water for several minutes and then use a soft-bristled, non-metallic brush to gently scrub away any grime. Do not use abrasive jewelry cleansers or harsh chemical cleaners. Keep in mind that some gemstones may have been treated or enhanced by processes such as heating, irradiation, diffusion, or oiling. Heated and irradiated stones generally don't require special care when cleaning, but diffused stones can become lighter if scrubbed too hard, and the oil on an emerald can be stripped away by cleaning, making the emerald look different. Should this happen, simply bring it to our store for re-oiling.

Pearls

Great care should be taken with pearls. The layers of nacre of which a pearl is made are very soft by jewelry standards and their low resistance to chemicals mean that special precautions must be taken when cleaning them. Never use detergents, bleaches, powdered cleaners, baking soda or ammonia-based cleaners on pearls. Also avoid using toothbrushes, scouring pads or other abrasive material to clean pearls as they will scratch the surface. After wearing pearls, wipe them off with a soft cloth which can be damp or dry. This will prevent dirt from accumulating and keep perspiration, which is slightly acidic, from eating away at the nacre.

If pearls have not been kept clean and are very dirty, they can be cleaned by your jeweler or can be washed in water and a mild soap such as Ivory or Lux liquid (some liquid soaps such as Dawn, can damage pearls) and cleaned with a soft cloth. Pay attention to the areas around the drill holes where dirt may tend to collect. After washing, lay the pearls flat in a moist kitchen towel to dry - do not hang them up to dry. Do not wear pearls when their string is wet as the string will stretch and can attract dirt which will be difficult to remove.

Pearl necklaces can stretch with time and the string can get dirty and weak. Therefore, they should be re-strung periodically - about once every year or two depending on how often they are worn. Pearls should be strung with silk having knots tied between each pearl to prevent them from rubbing against each other and from scattering should the string break. It is not advisable to include gold beads on your string of pearls. Gold can turn pearls ivory colored and coral black which is a permanent discoloration.

Pearls are composed of about 2 to 4% water along with calcium carbonate and an organic binder called conchiolin. If pearls become dehydrated, they can become brittle and crack. As a result, they should not be left by heaters or in places that get strong sunlight. Safe deposit boxes can be unusually dry, so if you ever store pearls there,

take them out occasionally and expose them to some humidity or moisture. Sealed plastic bags are not a good place for pearls as they can keep them from breathing and getting moisture. Jewelry pouches or cloth bags are ideal.

Precious Metals

Clean your precious metals with warm, soapy water. Use a very soft-bristled, non-metallic brush when cleaning metal, especially gold, which can be scratched fairly easily. Rubbing alcohol can be used to dissolve some of the stickier grime. Use a soft cloth that won't leave fuzz or threads behind to dry and buff your jewelry once it's cleaned.

Ultrasonic Cleaners

Ultrasonic cleaners are machines that clean jewelry by bombarding them with sound waves. This vibration shakes off dirt, but the vibrations can also cause serious damage. The inclusions in gemstones, especially brittle stones like emeralds, can be greatly enlarged by the shaking, making the stones less attractive and even less valuable. Soft gems like pearls should never be put in an ultrasonic cleaner. Because of the risk, we recommend against using the ultrasonic cleaners now available to consumers unless your jeweler specifically says it won't cause any damage.

Repairing

The Diamond Jewelry Factory does not recommend that you attempt to repair your own jewelry. Take damaged jewelry in for professional repair as soon as possible, especially if small pieces like stones or links of chain have fallen out. The longer you wait, the more likely small pieces will be lost.

Preventative repair is not expensive and can spare you the heartbreak of losing a cherished piece. Schedule a cleaning for your jewelry every year. During the cleaning, have your jeweler check for signs of wear, such as loose stone mountings or bent clasps, and fix them before they become a serious problem. If you have bracelets or necklaces that don't have safety chains or clasps, have your jeweler arrange to put some on.

Shipping

Taking a few simple precautions can make shipping your jewelry less stressful and ensure a safe delivery.

Package your jewelry in an appropriately sized box. When possible, use a box designed to hold the specific type of jewelry you are sending, since this will be more secure. Otherwise, wrap each piece individually in cloth, not plastic, and fill empty spaces in the box to keep the jewelry from shifting.

Buy insurance, especially for extremely valuable jewelry and use a

shipping method that allows tracking, such as DHL, Federal Express or UPS, so you'll be able to know when it gets to its destination.

Storage

Jewelry is vulnerable while it's being worn, but it can also suffer damage if it isn't stored properly. Diamond is the hardest substance on Earth. But it can get scratched... by another diamond. Diamond jewelry can also scratch softer stones as well as gold and even platinum. For this reason, it's important to store your jewelry so the pieces don't come in contact with each other.

Wrap individual pieces in tissue or cloth or put them in separate compartments in a jewelry box. Be extra careful with pearl jewelry since it is soft and scratches more easily than other gems and metals.

Often jewelry comes in a special box, bag or wrap. You should keep these as they are often the best means for storing or packaging the jewelry and will provide protection from damage and dirt.