

## **Taking Care of Your Jewellery**

**It pays to look after your jewellery.**

### **Keep your jewellery clean.**

Your jewellery will look at its best when it is clean. Clean gemstones shine far more than dirty ones. Rings in particular need regular cleaning. Washing hands and washing dishes does not clean the rings you are wearing. - In fact it helps make them dirty. Gemstones, especially diamonds, have an affinity with grease, and the grease in soap, cosmetics, hand-cream and dirty dishwater will adhere to your stones. Whilst the top of your ring will be wiped when drying your hands, the underside of the stones will be encased in metal and will not be touched by towels etc., and over time a film of grease will form on the backs of stones, making them dull and lifeless. This sticky film will attract all sorts of dirt, and if it is not removed the underside of a ring can build up. In extreme cases the back of the setting becomes totally clogged with dirt, pastry, and who knows what. – Disgusting!

Like everything else you own, your jewellery needs some maintenance to keep it looking at its best. - You expect to wax your car and polish your shoes, and your jewellery will also benefit greatly from occasional cleaning!

Cleaning a ring is a simple process, and if done regularly it will be faster and easier to do than if you allow your rings to become really filthy. An engagement ring that is worn all the time will need to be cleaned more often than a dress ring that is rarely worn.

### **Cleaning your Jewellery**

You don't need expensive cleaning products. Hand-hot water with a squirt of liquid detergent and a couple of drops of household ammonia is very effective. Place your ring in a bowl of this solution, and leave to soak for several minutes, then use an old toothbrush to brush the ring, paying special attention to the underside of the setting, where dirt gets trapped. Rinse thoroughly under running water. Do this in a bowl, in case any stones should fall out. (Sometimes when settings are badly worn, stones are being held in place by grease, and when this is removed they could fall out. If this happens the ring is in need of some repair work.) When the ring is absolutely clean, pat dry on a paper towel.

This technique is suitable for other items of jewellery in platinum, gold or palladium, and most gem-stones, especially diamonds, rubies, sapphires, emeralds and most transparent gems. It should not be used on pearls, opal, turquoise, lapis and coral or any porous gems. These should be taken to a jeweller for professional cleaning. Never wear these stones while bathing, swimming, or while working with chemicals or detergents.

Antique jewellery should be cleaned by a jeweller. Strung pearls and beads should not be made wet.

After wearing pearls wipe with a soft dry cloth after wearing to remove perspiration, perfume, hairspray and anything else likely to damage them. Never use abrasive cleaners on jewellery.

Opals, emeralds, tanzanites and peridots require extra care as they are easily damaged. Avoid cleaning solutions, perfume and hair spray while wearing them, and don't use commercial cleaning solutions to clean them. Use only a soft cloth and lukewarm water.

Never wear your opal jewelry in very cold weather, while washing dishes, or handling frozen foods, as extreme temperature variations can cause cracking.

### **Sensible precautions**

Try not to wear rings on adjacent fingers, as they will rub one another.

You should not wear jewellery:-

- When doing rough work, such as DIY, gardening, housework.
- When playing sports, or at the gym.
- Whilst swimming or on the beach.

You might say " I buy jewellery to wear, not to sit in a box". True, but then you buy nice clothes and shoes to wear too, and would you wear your best clothes or shoes when digging the garden or doing DIY?

### **Storing your jewellery**

Store each item of jewellery separately, in the original boxes, in separate compartments of a jewellery box, in soft fabric pouches, or in tissue or polythene bags. Whatever you do, NEVER jumble pieces together in a jewellery box. This also applies when you are travelling.

The hardness of gemstones varies dramatically, and softer stones will be scratched by harder ones. Diamond at no 10 Mohs' scale of hardness is the hardest natural material, at over 100 times harder than Sapphire and Ruby at no 9. Going down the scale, gems become much softer and more fragile. Mohs scale refers to the ability of a gem to scratch or be scratched by another stone. It does not refer to durability. Some stones that are quite hard are also brittle and can shatter easily.

Diamonds have different hardness in different directions, so one diamond can scratch another. - Incidentally, it is only this property that allows diamonds to be cut at all. Don't be tempted to "test" a diamond by trying to scratch glass. Lots of stones will scratch glass, so you will prove nothing, and you might damage your diamond.

Cosmetics including perfume and hairspray should be applied and allowed to dry before you put on any pearl jewellery, otherwise the nacre, or skin, can be permanently damaged. Use a clean, soft, dry cloth to wipe your pearls after you wear them. Air pollution and general wear will weaken the silk on which pearls are strung. Have your pearls checked regularly, and re-strung when necessary.

Keep chains fastened so that they don't get tangled up.

Precious metals are subject to damage from knocks, abrasion on rough surfaces, and general wear-and-tear. Marks will appear on rings, polished metal will lose some of its shine, and matte jewellery will tend to become more shiny with wear. - This is absolutely normal. A jeweller will be able to re-polish or re-matte your jewellery for you.

### **Have Your Jewellery Checked**

Take your jewellery to a jeweller for a regular check up to see whether any maintenance work is necessary. Don't wait until you lose a stone.

If you notice something that worries you, like a stone that is moving, or a claw that is catching, don't wear the item until it has been checked!

### **Insurance**

Make sure your jewellery is fully insured against loss and accidental damage. You should have your jewellery revalued at least every five years, to ensure that you have enough cover to replace any items that are lost or stolen, and to repair accidental damage, at current prices. Regardless of the original price, the figure that matters is what it would cost to replace now.

You need to have a professional insurance valuation describing each item in detail.

Silver Jewellery can tarnish, and should be stored in a cool dry place, in soft cloth pouch or acid-free tissue, out of the light. Avoid contact with chemicals. Slight tarnish can be removed by gently rubbing with a silver-cloth.

All precious metals scratch, and platinum is no exception. It is unique in that the metal is only displaced, not lost. Have your platinum jewellery polished if you are interested in maintaining a high shine. Look for a qualified jeweller or platinum trained bench worker for all adjustments, resizing, polishing and cleaning.

Don't forget, jewellery is expensive. Keeping it in good condition will mean that should you ever want to sell it, you will get the highest possible price. If you allow it to become worn and damaged you would probably only be offered the scrap value for it. If you are intending to pass the jewellery down the family, leave them something worth inheriting, not just a heap of scrap metal and damaged stones!

**By Andrew Leggett, owner of Aurum designer-jewellers.**

The company has been creating fine quality contemporary jewellery in platinum, gold and fine since 1985, and specialises in bespoke engagement rings and wedding rings.

**[www.aurumjewellers.com](http://www.aurumjewellers.com)**

