



All that glitters

Keep your jewellery sparkling and protected with these useful tips.

Like everything else, jewellery needs to be cleaned from time to time. Dirt, makeup, and skin cells can make pieces dull and cause settings to become loose. These tips should help to restore the lustre to pearls and the sparkle to stones and gold. If you are cleaning in or near a sink, make sure the drain is closed tightly and covered with a face cloth.

■ Cleaning

Diamonds – mix 1 cup of warm water with 1/4 cup of ammonia and 1 tablespoon of detergent. Soak for 20 minutes, scrub with a soft toothbrush and rinse in hot water. Air dry on absorbent towel or dry with a lint-free cloth. Check claws to make sure stones are secure in their settings.

Gold – mix 1 cup of warm water with 1/2 cup of ammonia. Soak chains and bracelets for 10–15 minutes. Rinse with warm water and let air dry on an absorbent towel.

Silver – use silver polish and a soft brush to clean in any crevices. Baking soda or white toothpaste can also be used. Rinse in warm water and dry thoroughly to prevent spots that could discolour the silver.

Pearls – never soak a pearl necklace, as the string may stretch. Instead, clean each pearl individually with a soft cloth dipped in soapy water. Don't use any product or solution that contains alcohol or ammonia. It can destroy the finish on the pearl. Wipe clean and buff dry with a soft, absorbent cloth. Pearl earrings, rings or pins can be soaked in warm, soapy water. Rinse and pat dry. After cleaning, rub on a drop of vegetable oil to make the pearls shine.

Rubies, emeralds and sapphires – mix 1/2 cup of warm water with 1 tablespoon of ammonia and soak stones. Scrub with a soft toothbrush, rinse in warm water and dry.

Semi-precious stones – the solution above can be used for amethyst, garnet, jade and aquamarine.

Lapis, malachite and turquoise – use cool water with a little detergent. Clean with a soft toothbrush, rinse in cool water and pat dry.

Opals – use warm water and mild detergent. Don't scrub since opals are fragile and can easily break. Rub gently, rinse in warm water and pat dry.

■ Storage

Storing jewellery to prevent scratches and tangles is important. Here are a few suggestions.

- Keep silver shining and free of scratches by storing it in flannel pouches like the ones used to protect silver flatware.
- Protect opals by keeping them in a humidior.
- Ice cube trays make a great place for organizing and storing earrings and rings.
- Line a section of your jewellery box with foam or Styrofoam and stick earring posts into it.
- To keep chains and bracelets from tangling, cut a piece of a plastic drinking straw a little shorter than half the length of the chain. Slip the chain or bracelet through the straw and close the piece.

■ Other useful ideas

- To untangle chains, put a drop of baby oil on a sheet of wax paper. Lay the knot in the oil and, using two pins, gently work out the tangle. Clean as directed above.
- Remove jewellery before swimming in a chlorinated pool. Chlorine can eat away at gold and silver.
- Take good pieces to a professional jeweller once a year to make sure clasps and claws are secure.
- Consider additional insurance on valuable pieces. 🌟