

Care, Storage, Cleaning

Care

Storage

Cleaning

What causes Sterling Silver to tarnish?

Since the Industrial Revolution, tarnishing of sterling silver is a natural process. This is a result of the oxidation of the metal. Our precious metals are under constant attack by atmospheric pollutants during the manufacturing process, time in storage, transit, use and display.

Of particular concern for sterling silver jewelry is hydrogen sulfide (H₂S) and sulfur dioxide (SO₂). Air pollution, petroleum products, fossil fuel combustion and natural sulfate breakdown are the culprits of corrosion, tarnishing and discoloration of metals.

Ironically, the more you wear your silver, the less it tarnishes! Silver should be protected from objects which are rich in sulfur such as: dried hard woods like oak, many paper and corrugated products made from the pulp of these woods. Oxidized / tarnished silver can be restored to its original color by a variety of methods

Jewelry Care

How to Care for Your Jewelry.

To care for your jewelry and keep it clean and ready to wear, gently wipe off excess make-up and skin oils after each wearing. Use a nub free, 100% cotton cloth and gently wipe the piece clean using only the soft pads of your fingers. Store in jeweler's tissue or a soft bag.

Jewelry Storage

Store in air tight containers. Moisture absorbants such as silica desiccant packets or chalk will help prevent tarnishing.

Is there anything to prevent future tarnish?

Absolutely! Anti-Tarnish Strips are made from treated highly-porous paper containing an active charcoal absorption ingredient. The strips are non-toxic and safe to handle. The strips do not emit any gas, fume or vapor - they simply absorb the airborne pollutants and moisture that cause corrosion, tarnish and discoloration. The strips remove harmful chemicals from the air and do not give off its own gases, there are no harmful side effects. Anti-tarnish strips will not leave any residue on your jewelry. They can be handled without fear of absorbing any harmful toxins.

Anti-tarnish strips protect sterling silver, silver plate, brass, pewter, bronze, copper, tin, gold and other metals. They will NOT remove existing tarnish! Give your jewelry a good cleaning and polishing; then, store your pieces along with the anti-tarnish strips to help prevent future tarnishing.

All you have to do is put a strip in an enclosure with your jewelry. The sterling silver pieces do not have to be touching the strip, just near it. One 2" x 7" strip will protect approximately 422 cubic inches (ex: 7 1/2" square container). You can cut the strips with scissors for smaller areas.

Each strip will last from 6 to 24 months, depending on your household conditions. There are many factors to consider: amount of air pollution in your area, humidity and the air-tightness of the enclosure. A good rule of thumb is to replace your strip at least once a year. If you notice tarnish or discoloration on a piece of jewelry, clean it and replace the strip.

Tarnish Intercept Bags work by using the bag to attract and absorb tarnish, instead of your jewelry placed inside of the bag. The bags are treated with a trademarked and patented process that causes the tarnish to cling to the bag. All you do is place clean jewelry inside the bag and seal the zipper closure. Watch the bag turn black while your jewelry stays shiny. Throw out the old bag and replace it with a new one.

Tarnish-Preventing Silversmiths' Wipes contain R-22. R-22 neutralizes airborne sulfur. The dry wipes remove tarnish instantly and leaves silver shining.

Space...

Give each piece of jewelry its own space. You can use compartments in a jewelry box or separate containers. Metal can scratch and scuff other metal. When gemstones and metals come in contact with each other, luster can be destroyed. Gemstones can scratch each other, too. If you prefer to keep all of your jewelry together in one big jewelry box, place each individual piece in a pouch or a sealed plastic bag.

Clasps...For bracelets or necklaces, hang them on hooks or fasten the clasp when storing to prevent tangling.

Dry, Dry, Dry...Very important! Dry your jewelry thoroughly before placing it in an enclosed space. This will help prevent tarnish, clasp weakening and water damage to certain gemstones.

Cleaning

Use a soft specially treated polishing cloth to clean tarnish from silver and bring it back to its original shine. Gently brush the piece with a soft toothbrush, mild dish soap (such as Dawn) and warm water to remove the tarnish residue and clean the polymer.

To clean dry, use treated polishing cloth. When applicable use a soft bristle toothbrush with liquid hand soap or Dawn & water. Dry with soft cloth. Caution: Some Liquid cleaners can damage finish on stones & leave residue on silver/gold.

Rinse and towel dry the piece.

Clean your jewelry frequently to avoid build-up of perfumes, lotions, body oils, body perspiration, and dirt.

Inspect your jewelry at least once a year and more frequently if you are 'rough' on your treasures. Look for loose stones, clasps, etc.

Cautions when Cleaning Jewelry and Gemstones

Jewelry care and recommendations for cleaning and storing your jewelry. This list is not all inclusive and only provides warnings for some of the most common improper practices used to clean jewelry.

To help retard tarnish on sterling silver, wrap the piece in jeweler's tissue paper and place it inside a plastic zip lock bag and seal.

When cleaning sterling silver remember that it is a very soft metal and can easily be marred by a fingernail or wadded piece of fabric pushed roughly against the metal surface. For this reason, use one of the following methods to clean heavier soils and tarnish:

To remove fingerprints, light grease or dirt, add a small amount of mild liquid soap to a half cup of warm water, soak 2-3 minutes, rinse thoroughly with clean water and dry completely before storing in an air tight plastic bag.

A polished appearance is the result of the metalsmith's effort to file, sand and buff the metal to a perfectly flat surface. When even minor scratches occur, as seen under a microscope, the surface looks like the ragged edge of a saw blade and light is bounced in and around those scratches like a voice echoing in the Alps. An unmarred surface allows the light to be bounced back smoothly, with no echoes, and results in a highly reflective surface.

When caring for your jewelry, never use anything but 100% cotton as a polishing cloth since paper, polyester, and coarse fabrics often contain wood fibers or synthetics. These materials may impart fine scratches in the metal, especially on sterling silver.

Dirt and grit left on the cloth from a previous use will now leave scrapes and pits in the piece you are trying to clean and polish.

Other Common Chemicals and Solutions to Avoid

Besides chlorine bleach, denatured alcohol, turpentine, acetone, and ammonia can cause harm. These chemicals can dull or even pit the surface on softer gemstones. Petroleum based products can actually "melt" amber if allowed to remain on the stone and they can do significant damage to pearls.

Gems requiring special care:

Pearls. Protect from scratches; perfumes and household chemicals which can wear away the nacre or cause color change.

Soft stones like lapis, malachite, turquoise, amber and opals can easily be scratched by pin stems and the edges of other jewelry. Protect pieces with these gemstones by wrapping them in jeweler's tissue and storing separately.

build up of oils and acids from human hands that can accelerate the tarnishing process.

Q-tip toothbrush to apply

Storage tip: Keep your jewelry in plastic bags and/or jewelry boxes. Anti tarnish pouches are very helpful too. Minimal exposure to air when not in use is the best way to keep your jewelry looking new!

To care for your jewelry and keep it clean and ready to wear, gently wipe off excess make-up and skin oils after each wearing. Use a nub free, 100% cotton cloth and gently wipe the piece clean using only the soft pads of your fingers. Store in jeweler's tissue or a soft bag.

To help retard tarnish on sterling silver, wrap the piece in jeweler's tissue paper and place it inside a plastic zip lock bag and seal.

When cleaning sterling silver remember that it is a very soft metal and can easily be marred by a fingernail or wadded piece of fabric pushed roughly against the metal surface. For this reason, use one of the following methods to clean heavier soils and tarnish:

To remove fingerprints, light grease or dirt, add a small amount of mild liquid soap to a half cup of warm water, soak 2-3 minutes, rinse thoroughly with clean water and dry completely before storing in an air tight plastic bag.

Be very careful when using any soaking method to clean jewelry that has soft stones such as amber, lapis lazuli, or turquoise. Extended soaking in any solution may harm the polish on the stone. Never use chlorine bleach to clean jewelry.

Always remove your rings and fine jewelry before using any product that contains bleach! Bleach can cause gold and other metal alloys to breakdown leaving the metal irreparably damaged. This includes swimming pools and bathing in hot tubs as chlorine products are added to prevent bacteria growth. See Hoover & Strong article for more information and testing results.

If you normally use specially purchased jeweler's cloths to keep your jewelry clean and shiny, be sure to use fresh cloths since the dirt and grit left on the cloth from a previous use will now leave scrapes and pits in the piece you are trying to clean and polish.

Never use toothpaste or other abrasives to clean metal or stones. You will find countless websites that recommend toothpaste as a cleaner, but this is not an accepted practice by fine jewelers. Although the abrasives in toothpaste are great for your teeth, they can damage the surface of the metal requiring the skill of a professional to buff and refinish. Toothpaste will also scuff the surface on amber, lapis, turquoise and other soft stones resulting in the fine polish which was produced by the skilled lapidary to be permanently marred.

Ultrasonic Cleaners

Ultrasonic cleaners are great for cleaning some jewelry but they can damage many gemstones and the chemicals are not recommended for pearls and many other fine stones. Repeated use can also loosen the settings and you could lose your precious gems.

No stones should be considered 100% safe in an Ultrasonic cleaner. Only the following stones are considered safe in an Ultrasonic cleaner: Sapphire, unless stone is oiled; Ruby, unless stone is oiled; Garnet, unless fracture filled; Diamond, unless fracture filled.

The second method is the use of a "liquid dip" jewelry cleaner which can be found in drugstores or ordered from jewelry supply catalogs. A dip can clean off tarnish without being abrasive to the finish. Be sure to rinse well with water. This type of product can be harmful to the jewelry if overused.

Caution Reminders

All gemstones should be protected from sharp blows, harsh chemicals, extreme temperatures and excessive exposure to strong light sources.

Gardening – Your garden is beautiful and doesn't want competition. Do not wear your jewelry while

gardening.

Gloves, Jackets, Heavy Clothing – It is best to put your jewelry on after you are clothed. Be careful when putting on and taking off Gloves, Jackets, Sweaters, etc.

Household chores – Sinks, faucets, washing machines, and dryers are dangerous for your jewelry. Chemicals and abrasive surfaces can scratch, discolor, and mar colored stones and precious metals.

The most effective way to preserve your jewelry is by keeping it out of harm's way! No, we can't completely shield our jewelry from the hustle and bustle of our busy lives; however, we can keep our jewelry beautiful just by limiting its exposure to certain conditions!

Our daily hygiene is good for us, bad for our jewelry!

Lotions, Cosmetics, Perfumes, Hairsprays...

Daily grooming exposes our jewelry to chemicals that can leave a residue or dull film that is very difficult, or even impossible, to remove. To avoid this, remove your jewelry BEFORE bathing.

Put your jewelry on AFTER you have put on lotion, perfume, cosmetics and hair products (mousse, gel, hairspray, etc.).

Think of your jewelry as the Finishing Touch!

Use water to help clean your jewelry - just be sure to thoroughly dry your jewelry after exposing it to water. Moisture, especially in an enclosed storage space, will tarnish sterling silver, loosen jeweler cement (used for stone setting) and weaken springs and clasps.

Remove jewelry before swimming. The water can loosen the gemstone settings. Chlorine in pools can damage stones and metals.

Extreme Temperatures...

Keep your jewelry away from excessive exposure to the Sun or cold. Extreme heat can damage the jeweler cement (can cause the loss of stones), fade gemstones, damage pearls and marcasite. Severe cold can cause thermal shock and fracture some gemstones. Never leave your jewelry near a heat vent, window sill or the dashboard of a car.

Gemstones

Always store gemstones in a safe dry place. Clean precious gemstones with a solution of 1 teaspoon gentle dishwashing liquid, 1 teaspoon household ammonia and 1 cup warm water to make a warm soapy solution. Use a soft bristled brush to loosen dirt. Do not use a home ultrasonic machine. Rinse well in a solution of rubbing alcohol and water. Wipe dry with a clean dry soft cloth. Leave jewelry on an absorbent paper towel for a time (maybe overnight) to make sure it is completely dry.

For semi-precious gemstones, wipe them clean with a clean damp cloth. Dry completely with a clean soft cloth. It is usually a good idea not to immerse semi-precious stones into cleaners, ultrasonic machines or water.

Only clean your sterling silver jewelry in cleaners specifically designed for silver. You may have to avoid this if your piece of jewelry has a stone set in it. Instead, try a polishing cloth or mitt.

If you purchase a commercial cleaning agent, make sure the label states it is safe for gemstones. If you are ever in question about how to clean a certain piece of jewelry, see a reputable jeweler.