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**Trade Secrets for Making Silver Jewelry Last a Lifetime**

**By JP Cambert**

Silver is a soft metal that requires ongoing cleaning to maintain its original luster, and proper storage to prevent scratches. Any jewelry or other item made with silver will change color over time due to a natural oxidation process with sulfides in the air. This can cause items to turn yellow, and then eventually darken to black over time.

There are several easy tricks of the trade that professional jewelers have developed to maintain the beauty of silver jewelry.

**Proper Sterling Silver Storage**

While it's tempting to wear a favorite piece all the time, you should always remove your jewelry before using any type of product with chemicals or abrasives such as chlorine, bleach, ammonia, alcohol, turpentine or acetone. That includes finger nail polish, dish detergent, makeup, and even hair spray! Many of these products can permanently damage the silver as well as gemstones.

Dampness, air, and light can cause a piece to tarnish so the optimal method for storing sterling silver jewelry is in an airtight non-reactive container such as a box lined with special non-tarnish material or Mylar or polyethylene bag. Each piece of jewelry should be placed in its own bag so it does not rub up against anything which could potentially cause scratches, kinks in chains, or the damage of a gemstone.

Never place your sterling jewelry on wood surfaces as most wood contains acids which can damage the finish. Card board and paper can also speed up the tarnishing process.

**Cleaning Your Silver Jewelry**

The more often you clean each piece the easier it is, and the less wear and tear on your jewelry, because the tarnish is minimal which allows for safer cleaning methods.

## Trade Secrets for Making Silver Jewelry Last a Lifetime

Silver is a soft metal that can be scratched so be careful to rub gently when cleaning. Never use anything but a clean nub free cotton or flannel cloth, a special sterling silver cleaning cloth, or a very soft bristle brush like a baby's toothbrush or a horsehair silver brush.

To remove light dirt, fingerprints or makeup just use a couple drops of mild liquid detergent (such as baby shampoo or Woolite) in a cup of warm water and rinse thoroughly with clean fresh water. Dry it completely and lightly buff with a cotton cloth. Always use a lengthwise motion when washing or drying your jewelry, as a circular motion often causes scratching.

The safest method for removing tarnish is to use a treated silver buffing cloth, but there are a number of silver spray polish or pastes that can work well for heavy cleanings if there is a large tarnish build up. To achieve the best results apply the spray or paste on the cloth and work into lather with your hand first. Tarnish in hard to reach areas can be left on to create an antique look and add definition to the jewelry. If you prefer to clean the entire piece you can have it professionally done, or use a soft bristle brush.

Sterling silver dips can be fast and easy but are not recommended by professional silversmiths and jewelers. If using a silver dip it is better to insert the item and remove it quickly, repeating after rinsing with water, rather than leaving the item in the dip for long periods of time. Follow up by buffing with a soft cotton cloth. If you leave the piece in too long, or don't rinse it well enough with fresh water, a white residue will be left which can be difficult to remove.

Should you purchase a cleaner or dip, ensure that the product is designed for the type of jewelry item you want to clean. Dipping is not recommended for liquid silver or silver items with gemstones, and even paste or spray cleaners remove the natural luster of stones so be sure to remove any trace of cleaner residue and rinse each item thoroughly with clean water.

### Additional Jewelry Cleaning Tips

Baking soda is often mentioned a cleaner but some jewelers claim that this method is too abrasive. If you wish to avoid using chemicals and want to try baking soda you should always test a small part of your silver jewelry piece first to see if leaves any noticeable marks. To use baking soda, lightly the item with clean water, then pour baking soda over the jewelry and rub gently with your fingers. Once the tarnish is removed, rinse with more clean water and dry with an all cotton cloth.

If your jewelry has been coated with a lacquer shield (to slow the tarnishing process) you should clean the item only after all of the lacquer has completely worn off. Cleaning agents can reach underneath the lacquer causing residue spotting.

Professional jewelers recommend cleaning your sterling silver jewelry as often as once per month, with a yearly professional cleaning for luxury and heirloom pieces. Cleaning gives you the chance to also check for loose stones or parts. Always have your jewelry repaired right away to prevent further damage.

Understanding the proper methods for storing and cleaning sterling silver jewelry is essential to the life

of each piece.

JP Cambert is a specialist in the fashion and beauty industry and owns several online shops including

Discount Silver Jewelry

store Silver Basement, as well as the

Discount Perfume

shop Unlimited

Perfumes.

## **Pure Silver... Fine Silver**

**By Linda Polansky**

Wearing silver jewelry is quite fashionable for young people and its white luster bestows a serene elegance on the wearer. You will find exquisite silver jewelry available in the market ranging from beautiful silver charms, necklaces, bracelets, earrings, rings, bangles and watches. It's much more affordable compared to gold and exudes a shine quite similar to platinum.

Silver has been used to make jewelry right the time of the Phoenician, Byzantine and Egyptian empires. Today, most of the world's silver comes from the mines of Mexico and Peru.

Pure silver is call fine silver. Since silver in its purest forms is very soft and quite malleable, other metals are mixed, to make it more durable. It's important to look out for the 925, .925 or Sterling Silver mark, when buying jewelry because these marks ensure that the silver is 92.5% pure. The remaining 7.5 percent of the jewelry is copper. Even though any other metal can be used to make up the 7.5 percent, copper is preferred since it is found to be the most suited alloy to silver as it can improve the metal's hardness and durability without diminishing it's white luster.

The 925, .925 or Sterling Silver marks shows that the silver jewelry you are buying is not silver plated and not an imitation made with other white colored metal alloys. At the same time, if you find a mark higher than the recommended 92.5%, avoid buying the piece as it will be too soft. It can't endure everyday wear and is not worth the money spent.

One thing about silver jewelry is that it develops a tarnish, which occurs quite naturally when it interacts with sulfur or hydrogen in the surrounding air. Tarnish can be removed by using polish specifically formulated to remove tarnish from silver jewelry. Silver polishes, solutions, or cloths required to remove tarnish can be found at local hardware stores or specialty craft stores.

Avoid exposing silver to chemicals such as bleach or ammonia which may happen when you are cleaning your house. When swimming in chlorinated water remove or set aside your silver jewelry,

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such as earring or chains, before your swim. Such exposures will only damage silver jewelry. It's best to place your silver jewelry in cloth pouch or in a separate area of you jewelry box. Proper care will ensure that your silver jewelry lasts for a lifetime.

Linda Polansky writes about

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