

Caring for your Wedding & Engagement Rings

Now you have your stunning engagement rings and wedding rings we'd like to offer a few thoughts on how to keep them beautiful. And don't forget INSURANCE.

Our advice can't stop your beautiful rings ageing but it will help to keep them looking their best.

Once again may we say "MANY CONGRATULATIONS!" to you both. Your beautiful symbols of love will now journey through life with you. Just like all of us, your rings will show signs of age and use. Contact with everyday objects will leave marks, scratches and dents. Over time these blend together developing an appealing soft patina. We recommend embracing this inevitable change as part of growing old together. However, to help keep your rings in the best possible condition the following advice should help, but further mitigating measures may be necessary depending on your work and lifestyle. Ultimately, you must decide on the balance to strike between wearing your rings and protecting them.

Please note that our care advice is general and the sources of potential damage given are not exhaustive. We recommend the cautious approach of removing your rings in any and all situations where you consider damage is a possibility. Our advice is for gold, palladium and platinum, and diamonds. For other gemstones and other materials, you should seek relevant specialist advice.

Insurance for your rings

You should consider insuring your rings against loss, damage and theft. For diamond rings please do ensure that the loss of a valuable diamond is definitely covered. Keeping the replacement value up-to-date is important too. Before travelling, please make sure that your insurance (existing and/or travel policy) covers the relevant locations, activities, and values. It is also good practice to consider how best to minimise the risk of theft and damage to your rings before departure.

Handling your rings

Moving your rings from one safe place to another should be done with your full attention and, just in case, over a soft surface. This will minimise any damage should they be dropped.

When not being worn your rings should be kept in a safe and secure location, on a soft surface, separate from other items. A ring case or pouch would be ideal. Never put your rings down onto a tiled or metal surface, and never into a pocket or wallet or purse where they will be scratched by coins and keys. Do not attach your ring to your keyring because, even if protected in a pouch, the danger posed by sharp steel keys is extremely high.

Before washing your hands make sure the sink plug is firmly in place. Soap will make it much easier for your rings to slip off and an open drain could prove disastrous. In a confined space like a shower cubicle there is an increased chance that you may strike your ring against a hard surface and cause physical damage. And showers have drains too. Take extra care when using public facilities.

Abrasion and pressure will damage your rings

Precious metals are soft compared to other metals and ceramics. For example, stainless steel keys, taps, door handles, and cookware will inevitably cause scratches and dents. Gradually your rings will take on a soft patina that reflects the ageing process. Diamonds are extremely hard but they are brittle

and can be chipped or even broken. Again, this is natural wear and tear and a feature of normal use.

At the gym and other rough stuff

It is important to remove your rings before strenuous activates including DIY, gardening, garage work, other forms of manual work, for rough outdoor sports and when in the gym. Wearing gloves will not prevent the high pressures generated on your hands and fingers from, potentially, deforming your rings and dulling their finish. While doing washing up, contact with ceramics, cookware, cutlery and abrasive cleaning sponges will cause marks to your rings.

Your wedding and engagement rings are subject to mechanical forces that push, pull and try to twist them out of shape. Gripping everyday objects like a gear level or a handle exerts considerable pressure on your rings. Gym equipment, rackets and golf clubs, tools, lifting heavy objects, and gardening all have the same effect.

Rings can also become snagged and pulled out of shape. Rings can't withstand everything that we can throw at them so reducing exposure to these "dangerous" environments is recommended.



Personal care and cosmetic products

Products that are safe for the skin such as soap, shampoo, gel, hairspray, make-up, and sun cream, are safe for your rings. However, they can leave a residue which will dull your rings and accelerate the accumulation of dirt from the environment. The same applies to contact with food and food preparation. This can be mitigated by a cleaning regime as described below.



Care for your diamonds

Diamond set rings should be picked up from the side or from the base. Avoid handling the diamonds themselves as this adds to the wear and tear of the settings. Contact from fingers also leaves oil behind which will reduce the brilliance of your diamonds.

Regular inspection

It's important to have diamond rings regularly checked by a jeweller because the settings are subject to wear and tear. This is to ensure the security of the diamonds. Additionally, if you think your ring feels different, or if you've given it a worrying knock, then do have it examined as soon as possible. The last thing you want is to lose a diamond.

For rings with large or exposed diamonds we emphasise the need to keep them away from the activity and environments listed in this guide and never to put them down onto hard surfaces. On your finger or in a ring case are the two best places to keep your rings.



Cleaners and chemicals can damage your rings

It is very important to remove your rings before using corrosive chemicals such as chlorine and chlorides, ammonia and ammonium compounds, acids and alkalis, bleaches and oxidizing agents, and all reactive substances.

Household chemicals

Kitchen, bathroom and other household cleaners, drain cleaner, polishing compounds, super-glue, dyes, nail polish remover, solvents, and all similar products can cause damage to your rings. We recommend avoiding contact between these classes of household chemicals or, when it's unavoidable, wearing appropriate solvent-proof gloves and thoroughly washing your hands and rings afterwards.

Hand sanitisers

Alcohol-free sanitisers contain benzalkonium chloride, which has many other names including alkylidimethylbenzylammonium chloride. It is a chlorine compound and therefore presents a risk of reacting with metals and thereby causing damage to rings and jewellery.

Purely alcohol based products are unlikely to affect precious metals and diamonds. However, they may leave behind a deposit that dulls the appearance of your rings and can facilitate the accumulation of dirt.

In practice, it is not possible to always know the exact details of the sanitiser you are using. We therefore recommend:

- avoid the use of benzalkonium chloride based products where possible,
- after using any hand sanitiser, at the earliest opportunity, thoroughly wash your hands (i.e. your rings) in warm soapy water,
- at the end of the day remove any residual sanitiser by cleaning your rings following the advice in the section below,
- if exposure to a benzalkonium chloride product cannot be avoided we think it's best not to wear your rings during times of such exposure.

As always, you must decide on the balance to strike between wearing your rings and protecting them.

Swimming

For caution, particularly if a frequent swimmer, you may want to remove your rings before using a chlorinated pool. It's advisable, following exposure to even mildly chlorinated water, to rinse your rings thoroughly in fresh water.



Cleaning your rings

To keep your rings looking great you should clean them in warm soapy water. Mix a few drops of mild liquid soap with warm water in a plastic bowl. Don't do it directly in a ceramic or steel sink as both are very hard and will scratch your rings and may chip your diamonds. Clean one ring at a time. Soak for about 15 minutes then very gently use a small soft brush to remove any build up of dirt.

If your ring is diamond set use the soft brush to gently agitate round the front of the settings and, if accessible, also brush very gently behind. Refill the bowl with clean water and rinse your rings. Always beware of the drain.

Dry with a clean soft lint-free cloth, rubbing the ring gently and briefly. For diamonds it is better to dab as you don't want to leave fibres snagged in the settings.

For the final finish you may want to buff your rings for a few seconds with a specialist polishing cloth available from companies including Goddards, Hagerty and Town

Talk. However, for areas of brushed finish only extremely light contact on a very infrequent basis should be considered. Please be aware that a polishing cloth will not remove scratches and dents, it can only bring back some brightness to previously polished surfaces.

Polishing is a form of wear and tear - it rubs away a tiny amount of the surface. Little by little polishing erodes brushed finishes, patterns, engraving, hallmarks, rhodium plating, settings and even the shape. If you do want to polish we suggest a brief light rub on an infrequent basis.

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Following this advice we're sure you, your partner, and your fabulous rings will enjoy a very happy life together!

WOOLTON & HEWITT

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