

How to care for Pearl Jewellery

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First of all, pearls are living things and they benefit from being worn. They need to absorb the oils from our skin and the moisture around them – so don't leave them for too long without wearing them.

However, they should be the last thing you put on (after perfume and hairspray) and the first things to take off when you get home. Chemical sprays can attack the nacre and cause damage.

Pearls should be wiped on a soft cloth to gently clean them from excess moisture or perfume or dirt before putting them away.

Please don't cook while wearing pearls (or smoke) as the pearls will take on the smell of the oil or cigarettes.

NEVER, EVER, wash pearl jewellery in soapy water, and never swim with them on or submerge them in water

The silk thread will stay damp and then could break through rotting, or just stretch – so the pearls move on the thread. Chlorine will eat away at any epoxy resin used in the mounting or setting and in a worse-case scenario might even cause de-lamination of the pearls.

It's not just swimming – pearls should not be worn during other exercise especially if you are likely to get hot and perspire.

When storing your pearl jewellery, keep them away from other jewels and metals. Pearls are really quite soft and are very prone to scratching. If you can, keep them in the original box provided by the jeweller. Particularly necklaces, these often come with raised inserts which help to keep the strands separate. If you haven't got a box, then a soft cloth or a soft pouch would be a good alternative. Avoid hanging them on a hook, as the silk would be strained and could stretch.

Pearls need moisture – so they don't do well in plastic bags or in airtight safes and deposit boxes. If you have to store them here, do get them out regularly to wear them.

If you are wearing a pearl necklace regularly, then you will need to have your necklace restrung at least every 2 years. If the necklace was originally knotted (i.e. each pearl separated by a knot) have them restrung in the same way. If you don't, the necklace may not be the same length when re-strung and may not even fit.

The knots also help the necklace to move naturally when worn and also stop the pearls rubbing on each other.

In conclusion, if you take care of your pearl jewellery it can last many years, and can become a family heirloom. Why not pop a card in the box with the details of when and why they were bought - so that future generations will know the history of your jewellery.