How can I clean gold jewellery at home safely?

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The right way to clean a gold piece depends entirely on what it is and how it has been made. The warm, soapy water that works perfectly on a plain gold chain can damage a meenakari enamel bangle or strip the finish from an antique-style Armari necklace. Match the method to the piece, and it will look right for decades; use the wrong one and some damage cannot be undone. Here is the specific guidance for each type, starting with what to avoid on everything.

What NOT to do — on any gold jewellery

- Toothpaste — it scratches gold surfaces.
- Baking soda — abrasive.
- Bleach and household cleaners — they attack gold alloys and destroy a rhodium finish.
- Ultrasonic cleaners on enamel, antique-finish, or emerald, ruby and sapphire pieces.
- Leaving jewellery to soak in water overnight.

How do I clean plain gold chains, bangles and rings?

Use warm water, a small amount of washing-up liquid, and a soft baby toothbrush. Work gently into the links and crevices, rinse thoroughly in clean water, and pat dry with a soft cloth. For daily-wear pieces, once a month is plenty. Avoid toothpaste and baking soda; both are abrasive, and never use silver-dip products, which are made for silver, not gold.

How do I clean stone-set gold jewellery (CZ, diamond or gemstone)?

Use the same warm, soapy water and soft brush, but work carefully around the setting and don’t force water behind the stone. Pat dry, then let the piece air-dry fully before putting it away so no moisture sits beneath the stone. One caution: keep coloured gemstones emerald, ruby, sapphire out of ultrasonic cleaners, as the heat and vibration can worsen the natural inclusions inside them. Diamonds and cubic zirconia are safe in an ultrasonic cleaner.

How do I clean antique-finish and matte-finish pieces?

This is the one to get right, because the damage cannot be reversed. Do not use an ultrasonic cleaner, a polishing cloth, or an abrasive brush on antique or matte-finish gold. The darkened, oxidised recesses that give these pieces their depth are part of the finish; once they are polished away, they cannot be brought back. For antique-finish pieces such as our Armari Collection, simply wipe with a soft, dry cloth to lift surface dust and skin oils. That is all they need. Don’t try to make them shine; the muted finish is the design, not tarnish.

How do I clean meenakari or enamel gold jewellery?

Enamel is glass fused to metal at high temperature- hard but brittle. Don’t use an ultrasonic cleaner, because the vibration can crack the enamel; don’t use hot water, which risks thermal shock; and don’t use any chemical cleaner. Wipe gently with a slightly damp, soft cloth, pat dry, and store the piece separately so it can’t knock against harder jewellery and chip.

Would you rather leave it to us?

PureJewels offers complimentary ultrasonic cleaning for diamond jewellery bought from us. Bring your piece to our Green Street showroom, and we’ll clean it while you wait no charge, and no appointment needed. Browse our diamond jewellery and 22ct gold jewellery collections to see the pieces this care applies to.

By Jayant Raniga, PureJewels Green Street

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