



Gem of an Idea

Secrets To Keeping Your Diamonds Sparkling

(NAPSA)—Diamond is the hardest natural substance on earth. It can cut any kind of rock or metal, but only another diamond can cut a diamond. In fact, a diamond must be heated to a temperature of 1292°F before it will burn. Yet the oil deposited from the mere touch of a finger can cause dirt to collect and make this nearly indestructible gemstone quickly lose its sparkling appeal.

So how can you keep your diamond looking its very best? The nonprofit Gemological Institute of America (GIA)—the world's foremost authority in gemology—offers the following tips on diamond care:

- **Handle your diamond sparingly.** Because diamonds are magnets for natural grease, they're not easy to keep clean. Handling a diamond with your fingers provides enough oils from your skin (the type of "grease" that most affects diamonds) to alter the way your diamond looks.

- **Clean your diamond regularly.** A simple plan to keep your diamond jewelry always looking beautiful is to soak the diamond in an ammonia-based household cleaner (such as window cleaner) overnight, once or twice weekly. In the morning, remove the diamond



Hard as they are, diamonds need a soft touch to stay brilliant and sparkly.

from the cleaner and brush it with a *soft*, clean toothbrush (one that has not previously been used in any way, and that you reserve exclusively for cleaning your diamond) to remove any leftover dirt. Take extra care to brush the back of the diamond as this will be the area that has collected the most oil and dirt.

Be aware that fragile settings and estate jewelry won't take kindly to being scrubbed with a toothbrush, so use a soft touch. Then, just rinse the diamond with water and wipe with a soft, lint-free cloth.

- **Avoid harmful solutions.**

Chlorine (as in household bleach) or abrasives (such as household cleaners or toothpaste) should never be used when cleaning diamonds, especially those set in jewelry. These erode some of the metals often used in diamond settings, and may loosen prongs, or even dissolve the metal completely.

- **Sometimes an ultrasonic cleaner is necessary to remove encrusted dirt on diamonds.** By sending high-frequency sound waves through a detergent solution, ultrasonic cleaners cause vibrating fluid to remove accumulated dirt and grime. However, they can also shake loose stones from their mounting, so this method shouldn't be used on fragile settings (or estate jewelry), and is best undertaken by a professional jeweler.

Regular cleaning will keep your diamond jewelry in gleaming condition and ready to sparkle on that special occasion.

If you have additional questions on diamond care, seek the advice of a qualified jeweler—ideally someone who has been educated by the Gemological Institute of America. Visit the Institute's Web site at www.gia.edu and check out the GIA Alumni Association for a list of members in your area.