



Is Your Nail Salon Insured? Is Your Nail Technician Licensed?

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Personally, I love those Saturday mornings when I can leave the chores of home behind, the worries of my work week behind, and yes even the spouse, three kids and three dogs behind and head out to my favorite nail salon for a little bit of "me time" to just relax a bit and have a nice manicure and pedicure. I never really worried about anything other than how pretty my fingernails and toenails looked until 2004 when American Idol judge Paul Abdul made international news after an incident had her in and out of hospitals for a year after a manicure gave her a nail infection. The infection had her thumb so sensitive that even the touch of hair on her hand made her scream. Nail fungus is a common infection that affects more than 2.5 million Americans annually.

The health risks associated with pedicures became clear in 2000, when more than 100 customers at a Southern California nail salon came down with mycobacterial infections. This fast-growing bug typically causes boils, if left untreated, it can also affect internal organs. Treatment usually includes antibiotics for six months or longer and can even include surgery. The reason the whirlpools at the California spa contained mycobacteria was due to nail cuttings, hair, and skin debris that collected behind the tubs' drainage screens.

With all that buffing, clipping and trimming that goes on in a nail salon it's not uncommon for hands and feet to get nicked and cut. Wherever you have open wounds and a lot of skin-to-skin and skin-to-surface contact, there is a chance of picking up some pretty gross bacteria or viruses including: athlete's foot, warts, swine flu, MRSA, mycobacterium fortuitum (ladies this is why you do not shave your legs prior to a pedicure!) And I would be negligent not to mention with nicks and cuts going on in nail salon you do have to watch for blood borne diseases such as AIDS. We are now living in a world where we have 33.4 million people who live with this disease with more than 1 million living in with HIV in the United States.

Across the country, unsuspecting consumers are having their nails done by unlicensed nail technicians working in unsafe nail salons. Although State Board Inspectors are trying to crack down on these nail salons, they can't keep up with all of them. Many salons continue to operate, despite numerous violations, putting their unknowing clients at risk for infection and disease by these unlicensed, untrained workers. In 2009, Nails Magazine performed a survey of Nail Salons and Nail technicians and discovered that 46% of the salons and technicians were uninsured!

Ten Simple Steps - How to Tell If Your Nail Salon Is Safe and Nail Technicians Are Licensed and Salon Is Insured

1. You can determine if the Nail Salon is safe by how it smells; if you smell harsh chemicals they probably have inadequate ventilation. Common chemicals such as Formaldehyde and Toluene found in nail salons can cause respiratory illnesses and cancer.
2. Look for antibacterial solutions including an autoclave device used to clean instruments. If you don't see these items at your nail salon, chances are the tools used on your nails are not being cleaned properly, which is not safe and can spread bacteria and germs that cause infections. If you don't see the autoclave device it is OK to ask - where is it?
3. The emery board your nail tech is using on you should be brand new. Emery boards should be used only once per manicure or pedicure. If your nail technician is using an old emery board, it is a sign of an unsafe nail salon. You can bring your own toolkit, which can be purchased online or in a local beauty supply store. Non-metal tools such as emery boards cannot be cleaned, so make sure your nail technician opens a new package to use on your hands and feet.
4. Your nail salon should have certificates (Health Department) and business licenses posted for everyone see. If you don't see them, it is entirely OK to ask to see them.
5. All nail technicians must display their professional manicure/pedicure license at their work station – this insures that your manicurist/pedicurist has received formal state approved training for a specific number of hours and has passed the state mandated test in order to be licensed. If these licenses are not displayed – ask to see the license. Insurance Policies in the United States do not have to be displayed, however in the United Kingdom they do have to display their Business Liability Insurance Policy. You can ask the salon if they carry Commercial General Liability and Professional Liability Insurance.
6. It is entirely OK for a customer to ask a question about the salon's cleansing routines and safety policies. If a salon is unwilling to answer or gets snippy with you – RUN – don't walk from that nail salon.
7. Skip the cuticle cutting. The cuticle's function is to protect the nails, and cutting leaves you vulnerable to bacteria and infection, your nail technician should never cut live skin or use a razor or knife on or around your nails.
8. The pedicure baths must be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected after each and every customer. If you are in doubt, ask, or use a disposable bath liner or skip the pedicure bath altogether.
9. The technician must wash his or her hands in between each client.
10. Check the cleanliness of the restroom – the majority of the time if the restroom is dirty it is a sign that cleanliness is lacking in ALL areas of the salons operation.

Another Simple Step If You Are Diabetic or Have an Embedded Hang Nail

1. If you are diabetic you should never allow a nail technician to cut your toenails – this should be done by a Podiatrist or your family Physician.
2. If you have an embedded hang nail never allow a nail technician to cut this nail – this should be handled by your family physician.

Be safe, be informed, have your nail services performed by a licensed and insured nail technician that takes pride in their services and follows the proper procedures to insure YOUR SAFETY! Also ask your Nail Technician if he or she is a member of the International Pedicure Association. Members of this association are going above the minimum State standards to insure your safety and participating in on-going Continuing Education courses designed to protect you, the consumer. <http://www.pedicureassociation.org/>