

Stay Healthy and Safe

**While Giving
Manicures and Pedicures**

A Guide for Nail Salon Workers



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the following topics:**

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Although this booklet is written for nail salon workers, this booklet can also help nail salon owners understand their responsibilities and take extra steps to protect workers, clients, and the environment.

This is a joint project of the California Healthy Nail Salon Collaborative (CHNSC) and the Labor Occupational Health Program (LOHP) at the University of California at Berkeley.



Healthy Nail Salons

Salons can take steps to protect worker health, client health, and the environment by going beyond what is legally required and using safer products and practices. In California, some counties and cities are recognizing these salons as “Healthy Nail Salons,” a label that can help attract more clients who care about worker and environmental health.

Most of the changes below are changes that nail salon owners must make. As a worker, if you are comfortable, you can share this list with the nail salon owner and ask if they are interested in making some or all of these changes.

A Healthy Nail Salon:

- 1. chooses nail polishes that do not contain the toxic trio** (dibutyl phthalate (DBP), toluene, and formaldehyde).
- 2. chooses safer nail polish removers** that do not contain butyl acetate, methyl acetate, or ethyl acetate. In most cases, this may mean using acetone.
- 3. avoids using nail polish thinners.** Thinners should not contain toluene or methyl ethyl ketone (MEK).
- 4. purchases nitrile gloves.** All workers wear them.
- 5. ventilates the salon to improve air quality.** This can include using ceiling/wall vents, window fans, ventilated tables, and portable charcoal-filtered ventilation machines. (See page 5 for more on ventilation.)
- 6. sets aside a special area** for artificial nail services with special ventilation, such as portable charcoal-filtered ventilation machines. (See page 5)
- 7. trains all nail salon workers** on safer practices.
- 8. tries to use safer artificial nail products** or none at all.
- 9. does not allow clients to bring in polishes or other products** unless they are free of dibutyl phthalate (DBP), toluene, and formaldehyde.

Program requirements are different in each county. To find out more about how to become a Healthy Nail Salon, contact the California Healthy Nail Salon Collaborative (see back page for contact information).

“I’m very glad to be participating in the Healthy Nail Salon program. I was nervous at first because I thought it might be hard to do, or might cost too much money, but in the end the staff... helped me out a lot. I feel so much better now knowing that my employees and customers are safe from harmful chemicals.”

– NAIL SALON OWNER

Worker Health and Safety: Chemicals

The chemicals used in nail salons can be harmful to your health. However, there are steps you can take to protect yourself.

What are some chemicals that are commonly used in salons?

- **Acetone** (nail polish remover)
- **Acetonitrile** (fingernail glue remover)
- **Acrylates such as 2-hydroxyethyl methacrylate** (gel polish, gel nails, artificial nails)
- **Butyl acetate** (nail polish, nail polish remover)
- **Ethyl acetate** (nail polish, remover, and fingernail glue)
- **Ethyl methacrylate** (artificial nails)
- **Formaldehyde** (nail hardener)
- **Methacrylic Acid** (acrylic primer)
- **Methyl ethyl ketone** (thinner)
- **Methyl methacrylate** (artificial nails) (banned for use in nail salons)
- **Ortho-phenylphenol** (disinfectant)
- **Phthalates such as dibutyl phthalate** (nail polish)
- **Quaternary ammonium compounds such as benzalkonium chloride** (disinfectant)
- **Toluene** (nail polish, fingernail glue)



Are gel polishes and gel nails safer than acrylic nails?

No. Gel polishes, gel nails, and acrylic nails all contain chemicals that can cause serious skin allergies. These chemicals are called acrylates. Some acrylates can cause asthma or make it worse.

Both gel nails and acrylic nails require you to coat the nail with several layers of products. You also need to file the nail which creates dust. These tasks increase the amount of acrylates and other chemicals that can get into your body.

If you must use gel polishes, gel nails, or acrylic nails, let in as much fresh air as you can. Open doors and windows. Turn on ceiling vents. Use ventilated tables or portable charcoal-filtered ventilation machines. After you finish, wash your face and hands to remove any dust from your skin. Finally, encourage clients to use regular polishes free of dibutyl phthalate, formaldehyde, and toluene.



How can chemicals get into your body?

Chemicals affect different people in different ways. Some chemicals used in nail salons can cause: skin rashes; eye, nose, and throat irritation; dizziness; and headaches. Other chemicals may cause more serious illnesses. If you use chemicals all day, every day, you are more likely to get sick than someone who uses the same chemicals once in a while.

To learn about the chemicals you work with, refer to the Safety Data Sheet (SDS). The SDS provides detailed information about a chemical, such as health effects, how to protect yourself, how to safely store the chemical, and what to do in an emergency.

Your employer should have an SDS for each chemical used in the salon and should train you on how to read the SDS. Ask for a copy. The SDSs are usually in English and can be difficult to understand. You can contact the California Healthy Nail Salon Collaborative (CHNSC) or the Labor Occupational Health Project (LOHP) for help (see back page for contact information).



Make sure your doctor or health-care provider knows what kind of work you do and the chemicals you use. Tell your provider if you are pregnant or planning to become pregnant.



You can breathe in, accidentally swallow, and/or absorb chemicals through your skin.

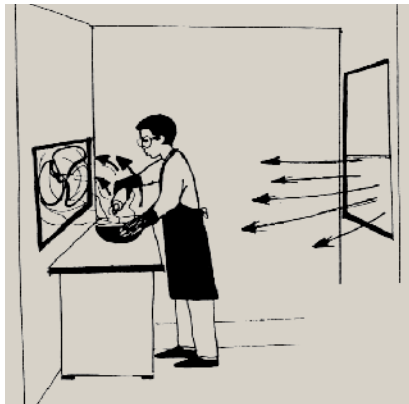
There are many things you can do to make your work safer from chemicals.

1. Choose safer products when possible.

There are safer nail polishes that do not contain the toxic trio: dibutyl phthalate, formaldehyde, and toluene.

2. Let in fresh air.

- Open doors and windows when possible.
- If the salon has a ventilation system in the ceiling or walls, or a window fan, make sure it works properly.
- Some salons have ventilated tables and portable charcoal-filtered ventilation machines. Change filters regularly. It is best if the tables are vented to the outside. Salons that want to be recognized as “Healthy Nail Salons” may need to use portable charcoal-filtered ventilation machines when doing artificial nails.
- Place floor fans near open doors or windows to let in more fresh air. Fans should pull air in on one end of the salon and push air out at the other end of the salon.



good ventilation



bad ventilation

Remember:

Just because something has little or no odor does not mean it is safe. Some chemicals have no odor but are still harmful to your body.

3. Use good practices.

- Always read labels and follow instructions when using products.
- Store chemicals in small bottles and label them. Close bottles when you are not using them.
- Put any trash soaked with chemicals (like cotton balls) in a sealed bag before you put it in the trash can. Keep the trash covered.
- Wash your hands before eating, drinking, or smoking. Also wash your hands before and after each client and after handling salon chemicals. Do not eat or drink near your workstation.

Remember:

Gloves, goggles, and masks can play an important role in safety. However, choosing safer products and letting in fresh air are the best ways to make the workplace safer.

Worker Health and Safety:

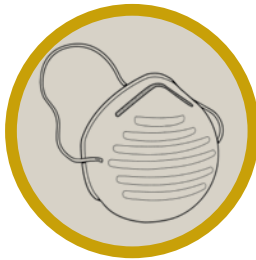
Chemicals *continued*



Gloves

4. Use proper personal protective equipment.

- Use the right gloves. Nitrile gloves will protect you from chemicals. Use latex gloves only if you are using acetone for a long period of time. Avoid vinyl gloves.
- Wear long-sleeved shirts. This prevents acrylic and gel dust from touching your arms.
- Wash your work clothes separately from other clothes. This prevents salon dust and chemicals from spreading to other clothes.
- It can be difficult to use a mask properly. Wearing the wrong mask or a mask that does not fit can be worse for your health. If you do wear a mask, here are some things to know:



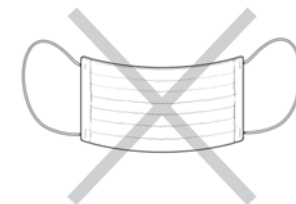
Paper dust mask



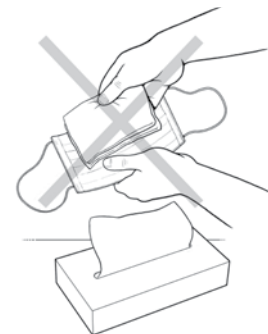
N95 dust mask



Air-purifying respirator



Paper medical mask



Paper dust masks protect you from some dusts (like nail filings) but not chemicals. The rectangular medical mask shown below does not provide a good fit. It is best to use a round dust mask with a metal strip that you can adjust to fit the bridge of your nose. Also, stuffing tissues in your mask will not protect you from chemicals.

N95 dust masks protect you against dust, viruses, and other germs but not chemicals. The word “N95” should be printed on the mask. Some have filters that reduce chemical odors. Some have a valve to help you exhale more easily.

Air-purifying respirators can protect you when you are mixing or transferring chemicals to small bottles. But they can be uncomfortable and you must be fitted and trained to wear one that is right for you. And, you must use the correct type of cartridge to protect you from nail salon products. You must know how and when to change cartridges.

- When transferring chemicals to small bottles, open doors and windows. Wear goggles, gloves, and possibly an air-purifying respirator.

Worker Health and Safety: Preventing Aches and Pains

Nail salon workers can get aches and pains from bending over or being in the same position ... these are called “ergonomic hazards.”

Take a moment to think about whether there are any parts of your body that are hurting or uncomfortable. Where do you hurt?

What can cause these injuries at work?

Aches and pains can be caused by holding the body in an awkward position. Aches and pains can also be caused by pressure on contact points... this can happen when your body touches a hard surface.

There are many things you can do to prevent aches and pains.

- 1. Raise the client’s hand or foot.** Use a cushion or clean towel to raise the client’s hand or foot so you do not have to bend over as far.
- 2. Use an adjustable chair.** Sit so that your feet are flat on the floor and your back is supported.
- 3. Put a towel or foam pad** on the table edge to soften it.
- 4. Adjust the lighting.** Good lighting can help you see without having to bend over.
- 5. Take frequent breaks if possible.** Changing positions and doing a different task is also helpful.
- 6. Slow down when possible.** If you are working too fast, your body becomes tense and it is easier to get muscle pain.
- 7. Do gentle stretching exercises in between clients.** You may need to check with a doctor first!



Bad position



Good position

Remember:
Adjust the lighting, chair, work tables, and other equipment to make your body comfortable.



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Worker Health and Safety: Infectious Diseases



“I learned about disinfecting tools a long time ago from school. It’s helpful to be reminded. I follow these steps in keeping my tools clean.”

– NAIL SALON WORKER

Infectious diseases include the common cold, flu, Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), and Hepatitis B (a liver infection). You can become infected if you come into contact with infected blood or bodily fluids.

There are many ways to protect yourself.

- 1. Avoid touching any blood or bodily fluids.**
- 2. Wear gloves.** Throw away your gloves immediately after using them. Do not provide services to a client who has any cuts, open sores, or blisters on hands, feet, or any other body part you might touch.
- 3. Always wash your hands with soap and water.**
- 4. Bandage and cover** all open cuts or bruises on your skin.
- 5. If a client bleeds, don’t touch the blood.** Hand the client a cotton ball to put pressure on the cut. Ask the client to throw the cotton ball in the trash. Do not touch the cotton ball.
- 6. Consider getting immunized against Hepatitis B.** Your doctor can help you decide whether this is needed. If you are likely to come into contact with blood or bodily fluids, immunization may be required.

7. Disinfect tools after each client:

- Wash tools with soap and water. Use a scrub if needed.
- Rinse in clean water.
- Dry with a clean cloth or towel. It's important to dry.
- Immerse tools in an EPA-registered disinfectant. Soak the tools for 10-30 minutes, depending on manufacturer's directions. The disinfectant must be covered at all times. Change the disinfectant at least once a week or whenever it is cloudy or dirty.
- Dry with a clean cloth or towel.
- Store all disinfected items in a clean, covered place.

You can also use a steam sterilizer (autoclave) to sterilize tools. Make sure the autoclave is registered with the federal Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Follow manufacturer's instructions. Note that an autoclave is different from an ultraviolet (UV) sanitizing box, which should only be used to store clean, disinfected tools.



Autoclave



UV sanitizing box

8. Disinfect foot basins and spas after each client and at the end of the day.

Follow the Board of Barbering & Cosmetology rules (Title 16, California Code of Regulations § 980.1-980.3) for how to clean basins. There are different rules for cleaning whirlpool footspas, pipeless footspas, and non-whirlpool foot basins. Always use gloves. Always write down the time and date of each cleaning in a pedicure-cleaning log.



Tip: Protect yourself when using disinfectant

- Try to avoid using disinfectants that contain quarternary ammonium compounds (such as benzalkonium chloride).
- Let in as much fresh air as possible.
- Try to clean surfaces before disinfecting. This can help reduce the amount of disinfectant you use.
- When disinfecting surfaces like worktables, disinfect only in areas where it is necessary.
- Follow manufacturer's directions for diluting disinfectant with water.

Remember:
Avoid touching any blood or bodily fluids. Wear gloves and follow rules for disinfecting.

Your Rights as a Worker



You have the right to a safe and healthy workplace. Sometimes, employers call workers “independent contractors” to avoid paying taxes and following labor laws, when the worker is actually an “employee.” Even if your employer does this, you may still have rights as a worker.

What is the difference between an Employee and an Independent Contractor?

- Whether you are an employee or independent contractor depends on many factors.
- For example, if you: rent a station; purchase all your own supplies and tools; have your own clients and set your own appointments; set your own rate and are paid by clients directly; and have your own business license, you are more likely to be classified as an independent contractor.
- However, if: the owner sets the schedule; you are paid by the hour; the owner or receptionist makes the appointments for all workers; you do not rent the space; the owner sets the rates paid by clients; and you use the owner’s tools and equipment, you are more likely to be classified as an employee.

Why does it matter?

- Employees have the right to workplace health and safety, minimum wage, workers’ compensation, and other benefits. Independent contractors do not.
- Just because a salon owner tells you that you are an independent contractor does not mean that you are. And, just because an owner gives you an IRS form 1099 instead of a W-2 does not mean that you are an independent contractor. If you need help, you can contact the California Healthy Nail Salon Collaborative (CHNSC), Labor Occupational Health Program (LOHP), or a legal services organization.

What are my workplace health and safety rights?

- As an employee, you can report hazards to Cal/OSHA, a state agency responsible for ensuring the health and safety of workers. Cal/OSHA can come to a worksite if they believe the employer is not following worker health and safety laws. To file a complaint, you can call, fax, or go in person to your local Cal/OSHA office. To find your local office, call 1-866-924-9757 (enter your zip code to find the local office) or visit <http://www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/DistrictOffices.htm>.
- As an employee, you also have the right to refuse work that could put your life in danger or cause serious injury. You may not be fired or punished in any way for reporting or making a complaint about unsafe work conditions. If you experience retaliation, you may file a complaint with the Labor Commissioner (also known as the Division of Labor Standards Enforcement) within six months. For more information, visit <http://www.dir.ca.gov/dlse/dlseDiscrimination.html>.

Remember:

If you are being paid less than the minimum wage or not receiving overtime, meal breaks, or rest breaks, visit the Labor Commissioner’s website at <http://www.dir.ca.gov/dlse/dlseWagesAndHours.html>.

Green Tips for Your Salon

Many salons are starting to use “green” or environmentally friendly practices. There are many ways in which salons have an impact on the environment:

Energy (gas and electricity) is used to:

- make nail polishes, bottles, cuticle clippers, plastic bags, and other products
- deliver products to the store
- light the nail salon
- dry towels and aprons

Chemicals and Materials are used to:

- make nail polishes and other products

Water is used to:

- make nail polishes and other products
- wash hands and flush the toilet at the salon
- disinfect and clean the footspa
- wash towels and aprons

Health Effects can occur when:

- workers are exposed to chemicals during the manufacture of nail polishes and other products
- nail salon customers and workers are exposed to chemicals during a manicure

Air and Water Pollution is created:

- during the manufacture of polishes and other products
- when used products are thrown in the storm drain and landfill

Pedicures, acrylic nails, gel nails, and other salon services also impact the environment. When you take into account all the nail salon services that are done each year in every salon across the state, these environmental impacts add up.



Green Tips for your Salon *continued*



- An audit by your electric utility can save **\$50 to \$200** per year, and possibly up to **\$500** per year.
- Simply replacing a T12 lamp with a T8 lamp can save **\$30** every year.



Aerator

- Putting an aerator on your faucet can save about **\$30** every year.

There are many steps salons can take to protect the environment. Here are some easy first steps that salons can take while at the same time:

- lowering their electric and water bills
- attracting more customers who care about the environment, and
- being seen as leaders in the community.

Many of these changes are changes that nail salon owners must make. Some are changes that you as a worker can make on your own.

1. Reduce chemical exposure by

- **Choosing safer nail products when possible.** Avoid products that contain the toxic trio of toluene, formaldehyde, and dibutyl phthalate.

RESOURCES: Ask your beauty supply store for products without the toxic trio. You can also contact the California Healthy Nail Salon Collaborative for help.

- **Choosing safer cleaning chemicals.** Multipurpose chemicals are usually safer than special cleaners.

RESOURCES: Ask your beauty supply, grocery, or hardware store for safer cleaning chemicals. Go to www.greenseal.org to find safer cleaning products.

- **Avoiding pesticides.** Discourage bugs and rodents from coming into the salon by storing food in closed containers. Make sure garbage lids are tightly closed.

RESOURCES: Ask your local hardware store for traps, baits, and barriers. If you have to use chemical pesticides, use products that are labeled "caution" instead of "warning" or "danger."

- **Disposing of hazardous waste properly.** Hazardous waste includes leftover nail polish, nail polish remover, cleaning chemicals, batteries, fluorescent lamps, and pesticides. These wastes do not go in the sink, toilet, or regular garbage. Rules for disposing of hazardous waste can be complicated. The most important things salon owners can do are to:

- Collect hazardous waste in containers.
- Label each container with the words "hazardous waste" and with the date that you started collecting the waste.
- Take the containers to a collection program within 180 days.
- Train workers on how to handle hazardous wastes and how to respond to an emergency.

RESOURCES: Your county or city may have a "House hold Hazardous Waste" collection program where you can drop off hazardous waste. For the location nearest you, go to www.earth911.org, click on "Recycling Search." For more information, go to <http://www.dtsc.ca.gov/HazardousWaste/index.cfm>.

2. Save energy by

- **Doing an energy audit.** An audit will show you how to save on your electric bill.
RESOURCES: Ask your electric utility company if they can do an audit for free.
- **Turning off lights and electronics** when they are not in use.
RESOURCES: If you are buying new electronic equipment, look for the Energy Star label. These products can save you money on your electric bill.
- **Upgrading your lighting.** Buy T8 lamps with electronic ballasts. You'll save up to 40% more energy and save on electricity bills. Recycle old lamps and ballasts.
RESOURCES: Check with your electric utility company for rebates. You can buy T8 lamps and often recycle old lamps at hardware stores.
- **Maintaining the heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) system.** Clean permanent filters or change replaceable filters every two months.
RESOURCES: If your salon rents space, check the lease agreement—it may be your landlord's responsibility to maintain the HVAC system.

3. Reduce waste by

- **Recycling.** Set up recycling bins at your salon.
- **Buying recycled-content paper bags.** When customers buy salon products, ask if they need a bag. Provide bags made of recycled paper instead of plastic bags.

4. Save water by

- **Doing a water use survey.** An audit by your water utility company will show you how to save on your water bill.
RESOURCES: Contact your water utility to ask for a free water use survey.
- **Installing a low-flow aerator in your faucet.** This device attaches to your faucet and reduces water flow to 1 to 1.5 gallons per minute. You should see a lower water bill.
RESOURCES: Purchase an aerator at your local hardware store for about \$5. Or, check with your water utility company for free aerators.
- **Using less water to flush your toilet.** Install toilets that use 1.6 gallons of water per flush or less. For old toilets, fill a half-gallon jug (like a milk jug) with sand or gravel. Place the jug in the toilet tank (not the toilet bowl). You will save half a gallon of water with each flush and save on your water bill too. You can also buy a special toilet tank bag and fill it with water.
RESOURCES: For detailed instructions and photos, go to <http://www.wikihow.com/Convert-Any-Toilet-to-a-Low-Flush-Toilet>. Some utilities provide rebates and free toilet tank bags.
- **Dry sweeping the floors.** Use brooms or mops with microfiber cloths that you can wash and use again. If you do use a wet mop, collect the dirty water and pour it in the sink or sewer. Do not let any dirty water flow into the street or storm drain.
- **Repairing all leaks.** A faucet with a slow leak can waste 10 gallons of water a day. A leaky toilet can waste 1000 gallons of water a day.
RESOURCES: You can buy special tablets from your water utility company to find toilet leaks.



Remember:
You can choose products that protect your health, your clients' health, and the environment.

For More Information

Additional resources:

- California Healthy Nail Salon Collaborative, “Toxic Trio” brochure, available at www.cahealthynailsalons.org
- Cal/OSHA workplace guidance document (forthcoming), available at <http://www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/>
- University of Connecticut Health Center, “I’m Pregnant ... How Can I Protect Myself and My Pregnancy if I Keep My Job at the Nail Salon?” available at <http://nailsalonalliance.org/nail-salon-reports/>
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, “Protecting the Health of Nail Salon Workers,” available at <http://www.epa.gov/dfe/pubs/projects/salon/nailsalonguide.pdf>

If you have questions, please contact us at:

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