

SAFETY AND HEALTH TIPS FOR NAIL TECHNICIANS

Working in a nail salon can be harmful to your health. Exposure to chemical and infectious agents, and strain on muscles are the most commonly reported concerns.

Chemicals

There are many chemicals used in salons, and some are more hazardous than others. Workers can breathe in chemicals, get it on their skin or in their eyes, or even swallow them when they eat or drink.



Toluene, formaldehyde and dibutyl phthalate are called the “toxic trio” and are often found in many nail salon

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products. Nail polish and nail hardeners, polish removers, strengtheners, artificial nails and removers, and nail tips adhesives all may contain chemicals which could cause sinus or breathing irritation, difficulty breathing, asthma, cough, skin irritations, or allergies in some workers.

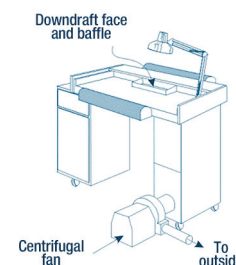


Steps to protect workers from chemical exposure

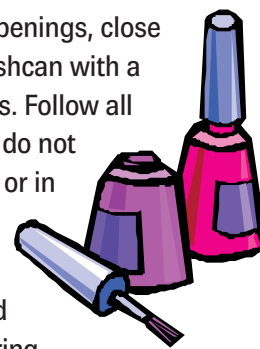
- 1) **Read the label.** This gives some basic information about the product. Urge your employer to use products that are “3-free” (no “toxic trio” chemicals) or “acid-free”.
- 2) **Get trained.** Employers must train employees so they understand how the product could be harmful, and how it can be used more safely. OSHA requires

that employers have copies of the Safety Data Sheet (SDS) for each product.

- 3) **Ventilate the room.** Bring in as much fresh air as possible, and make sure the air does not blow the chemicals into the worker's face. Always keep the ventilation and exhaust system on. System's filters should be changed per manufacturer's recommendation. If there are ventilation tables, be sure they are turned on, that charcoal and HEPA dust filters are changed regularly, and catch basins are cleaned once a week.



- 4) **Use small bottles** with small openings, close them tightly, and use metal trashcan with a lid tight to dispose pads/tissues. Follow all instructions for safe disposal – do not pour chemicals down the drain or in the toilet.
- 5) **Paper or surgical masks** will **not** protect workers. You should only use NIOSH-approved filtering facepiece respirators if the level of dust or chemical vapors poses a risk to workers.
- 6) **Wear goggles/safety glasses** and the right kind of disposable gloves when handling products (see the SDS). Wash your hands before and after each client or when handling products, and before and after eating or drinking.



“Ergonomics” is “fitting the task to the worker” to prevent injuries to your muscles and bones. Nail salon workers can get aches and pains in their back, shoulder and hands from leaning over for long periods of time and from repeating the same movements, like filing and buffing nails.

Steps to protect workers from musculoskeletal problems

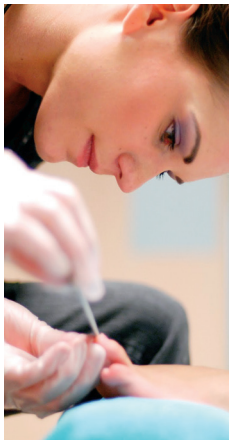
- 1) Use an adjustable chair to support your back.
- 2) Take breaks if possible. Changing position helps blood flow.
- 3) Put a towel or pad on the table edge. This provides a cushion for arms, hands, wrists and elbows.
- 4) Use good lighting. This will prevent too much bending over.



Infectious Agents – Nail salon workers can be exposed to **fungal infections** by touching infected skin, or using unclean equipment. **Viruses** like hepatitis B, hepatitis C and HIV are a concerns if a worker comes in contact with infected blood from a client or co-worker.

STEPS TO PROTECT WORKERS FROM INFECTION

- 1) Wear gloves to avoid touching cuts or infected skin. Give the client a cotton ball/tissue to stop bleeding, and throw away gloves and other materials immediately after using them.
- 2) Clean and disinfect tools after each client. Use gloves, use soap and water. Soak in disinfectant for 10-30 minutes, rinse in clean water, and dry with a clean cloth. Disinfect foot basins after each client.



Your Health and Safety Rights on the Job under OSHA (the Occupational Safety and Health Administration)

If you are an employee at a nail salon, your employer must give you training and the protections you need to be safe on the job. The training must be in a language you understand.

You have the right to ask OSHA to inspect your workplace, and to file a complaint if your employer is not following OSHA rules.

Where to Go for Help

NYCOSH is a non-profit organization that advocates for the right to safe and healthy jobs for every worker. Go to www.nycosh.org, or call 212-227-6440, for more information.

OSHA is the federal agency whose mission is to protect workers from unsafe and unhealthy workplaces. Go to www.osha.gov, or call 1-800-321-6742 for more information on protections for nail salon workers.



You also have other rights at the workplace, such as the right to minimum wage, overtime pay after 40 hours, and the right to keep all the tips you receive. For more information, call the New York State Department of Labor at 888-469-7365 or go to www.labor.ny.gov

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This factsheet was adapted from OSHA's *Stay Healthy and Safe While Giving Manicures and Pedicures: A Guide for Nail Salon Workers* (OSHA 3542-05, 2012). Funding provided by the NYS Pollution Prevention Institute through a grant from the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation.

Any opinions, findings, conclusions or recommendations expressed are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of Environmental Conservation.