



# REDUCING RISKS TO REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

*A Resource for Women who Work in Nail Salons*



This booklet is for nail technicians. It will help you learn more about how nail salon work may affect your reproductive health. It will give you information about lowering some of the risks to your reproductive health while you are working in a nail salon. This booklet includes:

- questions you may have;
- information about the chemicals you work with;
- ways you can protect yourself; and
- resources if you need additional help or information.

Your body and your health are important. We hope the information in this booklet will help you take care of your health.

This resource is also available online in English, Chinese and Vietnamese at [www.ctchc.org/nails](http://www.ctchc.org/nails)

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**Parkdale**



**Queen West**

**Parkdale Queen West  
Community Health Centre**



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# SOME QUESTIONS NAIL TECHNICIANS MAY HAVE



**“How do I know if the chemicals I work with in the salon affect my health?”**



Scientists are trying to better understand how these chemicals affect your health. Some of the chemicals you are using in your work – in nail polishes, fingernail glues, artificial nails, removers, disinfectants - may be harmful. Scientists know they are harmful to animals and there is concern that they may have the same effects on humans. They do not know how long these chemicals may affect your body in the future.

Because of the possible risks to your health, it is important that you protect yourself. This means being as careful as you can to reduce your exposure to these chemicals. This booklet provides ideas about how to do this.

**“How do these chemicals enter my body?”**



**through  
your skin**



**through the  
air you breathe**



**through  
your food**

**“I have been trying to get pregnant for a long time. Am I having problems because of the chemicals I am using?”**



The answer to this question is not easy to know. If you are trying to have a baby and you do not get pregnant, talk to your doctor or nurse practitioner about your options. You may be referred to a fertility specialist. You can also learn more about your fertility online. **See fertility information services at the back of this booklet.**

**“Can I have an abortion?”**



Abortion is legal in Canada. It is a medical procedure. There are tests that doctors can do in the early months of pregnancy to see if the fetus appears healthy. Talk to your doctor or nurse practitioner, visit a community health centre, or call Toronto Public Health’s InfoLine – **all listed at the back of this booklet** – for a list of sexual health clinics and abortion clinics.



**“When is the most dangerous time to work with chemicals if I am already pregnant?”**



The time of highest risk to a fetus related to chemical exposure is during your first three months of pregnancy. Although it is not always possible to plan a pregnancy, there are ways you can reduce your exposure: **See Reducing Your Risks at Work on page 7.**

If you are concerned about the health of your fetus, talk to your doctor or nurse practitioner about getting more information.

**“What should I do if I don’t want to get pregnant while I work in a nail salon?”**



Because of the possible risks from chemical exposures, you may choose to use birth control while you are working in a nail salon.

Your family doctor or nurse practitioner, as well as a number of clinics, can help you plan a pregnancy. They can help you decide on the method of birth control that is best for you.

**See the list of resources at the back of this booklet.**

**“How do I know if my nail salon is using dangerous chemicals?”**



Although many products do not include ingredients on the label, some of the products you use may show the name of the chemicals on the labels. Different chemicals have different effects. Here are some that may have a harmful impact on your reproductive system:

1. **TOLUENE** A solvent used in nail polish, polish remover and fingernail glue.
2. **DIBUTYLPHTHALATES** “Plasticizers” used in nail polish.
3. **FORMALDEHYDE** Used in nail polish as a hardener.

4. **PARABENS** Used in nail polish as a preservative.
5. **ACRYLAMIDES** Used to strengthen nails in the topcoat of some polishes.
6. **TRIPHENYL PHOSPHATE (TPP or TPHP)**  
A “plasticizer” used in some nail polishes.

“How can I talk to the salon owner to change some of the products they buy?”



Some owners are more willing to talk about this problem than others. Here are some ideas that may help:

- Tell them if some customers have complained about the smells and effects of your products, such as difficulty breathing or headaches.
- Tell them that a healthier salon is better for everybody.
- Talk to the other workers to decide how to approach the owner with this idea. You and your co-workers can get help with this. **See the list of legal and labour services at the end of this booklet.**





# POTENTIAL RISKS TO YOUR REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

Many chemicals used in salons are harmful to animals. Scientists are concerned that they may have the same effect on humans.

- These chemicals may make it more difficult to get pregnant.
- They may cause miscarriages.
- They may harm the fetus developing in the mother.

Chemicals in nail salons may also affect the health of your child as they continue to grow in their early years, but scientists are still trying to understand these effects.

Because of the potential risks to your reproductive health, we recommend being as careful as you can to reduce your exposure to these chemicals.

The next page has suggestions about how to do this.

Your health and safety are important. Use this information to help you take care of yourself the best you can.



# REDUCING YOUR RISKS AT WORK

- Open doors and windows and use fans to bring in fresh air.
- Wear gloves and clothing that protect your skin.
- Moisturize your skin.
- Wear a mask to help keep out dust from filing.
- Put garbage with chemicals in a closed bag.
  - Throw the bag in a garbage with a lid.
  - Close the lid and keep it closed.
- Close bottles of chemicals when you are not using them.
- Take breaks away from your work station.
- Go outside for fresh air whenever you can.
- Do not eat or drink at your work station or near the place where chemicals are kept.
- Do not wear jewelry that may trap chemicals and water.
- Change your clothes when you get home.
- Do not wear work clothes again until you have washed them.
- Ask the nail salon owner to use safer products.
- When possible, don't bring babies or children into the salon.





# FOR MORE HELP AND INFORMATION

Many of the resources below are specific to people living in Ontario. You do not need health insurance or proof of your immigration status to use most of these resources.

## INFORMATION ON DANGEROUS CHEMICALS AND PROTECTING YOUR HEALTH

**Women's Voices for the Earth**  
[www.womensvoices.org/safe-salons](http://www.womensvoices.org/safe-salons)

**National Network on  
Environments and  
Women's Health**  
[www.cwhn.ca/en/node/46338](http://www.cwhn.ca/en/node/46338)

**California Healthy  
Nail Salon Collaborative**  
[www.cahealthynailsalons.org](http://www.cahealthynailsalons.org)

**Booklet:**  
*Stay Healthy and Safe While  
Giving Manicures and Pedicures*  
Available in English, Vietnamese  
and Chinese  
[www.osha.gov/Publications/3542nail-salon-workers-guide.pdf](http://www.osha.gov/Publications/3542nail-salon-workers-guide.pdf)

## HEALTH SERVICES

### **Parkdale Queen West Community Health Centre**

\*services in English,  
translation available

 [416-703-8480 ext 2233](tel:416-703-8480)  
168 Bathurst St., Toronto  
[www.ctchc.org](http://www.ctchc.org)  
1229 Queen St. West, Toronto  
[www.pchc.on.ca](http://www.pchc.on.ca)

### **IWHC Toronto (formerly Immigrant Women's Health Centre)**

\*services in multiple languages  
489 College St., Suite 200, Toronto

 [416-323-9986](tel:416-323-9986)  
[www.immigranthealth.info](http://www.immigranthealth.info)

### **South Riverdale Community Health Centre**

\*services in English,  
translation available

 [416-461-1925](tel:416-461-1925)  
[www.srchc.ca](http://www.srchc.ca)

### **Toronto Public Health AIDS and Sexual Health InfoLine**

For information and referrals to  
sexual health clinics, for birth  
control, pregnancy test, STI testing  
and abortion counselling

 [416-392-2437](tel:416-392-2437) or [1-800-668-2437](tel:1-800-668-2437)  
[www1.toronto.ca/wps/portal/contento.nly?vgnextoid=d7f87dbbfd510410VgnVCM10000071d60f89RCRD](http://www1.toronto.ca/wps/portal/contento.nly?vgnextoid=d7f87dbbfd510410VgnVCM10000071d60f89RCRD)

## FERTILITY INFORMATION SERVICES

### Office on Women's Health

[www.womenshealth.gov/pregnancy/you-get-pregnant/trying-conceive](http://www.womenshealth.gov/pregnancy/you-get-pregnant/trying-conceive)

### Justisse Method of Fertility Management

[www.justisse.ca](http://www.justisse.ca)

## ENGLISH LANGUAGE SUPPORT

Call 211 or visit [www.211.ca](http://www.211.ca)

## LEGAL SERVICES

### Canadian Environmental Law Association (CELA)

\* services in English

416-960-2284  
[www.cela.ca](http://www.cela.ca)

### Chinese & Southeast Asian Legal Clinic

\*Provide legal services to low income, non-English speaking clients from the Chinese, Vietnamese, Cambodian and Laotian communities across Ontario.

416-971-9674

Ontario toll free number:

1-844-971-9674  
[www.csalc.ca](http://www.csalc.ca)

### Parkdale Community Legal Services

\*services in English, translation available

1266 Queen St. West, Toronto

416-531-2411

[www.parkdalelegal.org](http://www.parkdalelegal.org)

## LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT

### Workers' Action Centre

\*services in English

720 Spadina Ave., suite 223

416-531-0778

[www.workersactioncentre.org](http://www.workersactioncentre.org)

### Working Women's Community Centre

\*services in multiple languages

533A Gladstone Ave., Toronto

416-532-2824

[www.workingwomencc.org/](http://www.workingwomencc.org/)

### Employment Standards Information Centre

416-326-7160

[www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/es](http://www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/es)

**To make a confidential complaint about health conditions in your workplace:**

### City of Toronto - Body Safe

Contact the Toronto Public Health Complaints Officer:

416-338-7600

[tphfeedback@toronto.ca](mailto:tphfeedback@toronto.ca)

### Ontario Ministry of Labour - Health and Safety Contact Centre

\* translation available

1-877-202-0008

[www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/](http://www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/)



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This brochure was produced by the Healthy Nail Salon Workers Project (Toronto) with contribution to content by Lyba Spring.

The Project is a collaboration between the Parkdale Queen West Community Health Centre and the National Network on Environments and Women's Health (NNEWH).



**Facebook:** Healthy Nail Salon Network - Toronto



**Twitter:** @TOHealthyNails



**Contact us at:** [nailsalonproject@ctchc.com](mailto:nailsalonproject@ctchc.com)



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