

REDUCING RISKS TO RESPIRATORY HEALTH

A resource for nail technicians



WHAT IS THE ISSUE?

People who work in nail salons can develop problems with their lungs that can make breathing difficult. But there are things that nail technicians can do, and measures that nail salon owners can take, to make the work environment healthier for both staff and customers.



“How do the products I work with affect my lungs and breathing?”



1. The products used in nail salons contain chemicals that can cause harm to the airways and the lungs. This is even more of a risk when someone is exposed to the chemicals often. Some of these chemicals are “volatile”, meaning that they evaporate into the air at room temperature, and then they can be inhaled by nail technicians and customers. They are often referred to as volatile organic compounds or VOCs. Some of the main VOCs found in nail salons are:
 - **TOLUENE** : in nail polish, nail hardeners and polish removers
 - **ACETONE** : in nail polish remover
 - **ACETONITRILE** : in artificial nail remover
 - **CAMPHOR** : in nail polish





2. A lot of dust is produced when artificial nails are filed. If this dust stays in the air, it will be inhaled by staff and customers which can irritate the nose, throat, airways and lungs.
3. Some salons do not have good ventilation to help reduce the levels of chemicals and dust.
4. Procedures that nail technicians perform often require that their nose and mouth are close to the chemicals and dust. This increases the risk of harm to the nose, throat, airways and lungs.
5. Latex gloves used by some nail technicians can lead to latex allergies which can lead to asthma.

"What kinds of symptoms should I look out for?"



- a scratchy throat or change in your voice
- coughing
- runny nose
- chest tightness
- shortness of breath

It's important that you speak to a health care provider if you are experiencing any of these symptoms, particularly if they are worse at work (or better when you are away from work).



Creating and applying **artificial nails** creates particular problems for respiratory health. The chemicals used to create artificial nails such as acrylates and solvents can irritate the nose, throat and lungs.

“What kinds of health problems can develop from chemical and dust exposures?”



A nail technician can develop respiratory problems they did not have before or problems they had before working in a nail salon can worsen. Not everyone who works in a nail salon will develop respiratory problems.

Health problems that have been connected to working in nail salons are:

ASTHMA: A lung disease where the airways in the lungs become inflamed and more sensitive to irritants. When exposed to irritants, the airways can tighten up (constrict) which can cause the following symptoms: coughing, wheezing (whistling sound from the chest), shortness of breath and chest tightness.

Asthma can develop over months or years as a result of exposure to chemical vapours, dust particles, or other substances that irritate the lungs.

RHINITIS: Inflammation of the lining of the nose that can be caused by a viral infection, like a cold, or by exposure to chemicals, such as acrylates found in nail products.

Common symptoms of rhinitis include: stuffy or runny nose, sneezing, mucus (phlegm) in the throat, and coughing.

If a nail salon employee experiences any of the symptoms noted above, it is important to talk to a health care provider.



REDUCE YOUR RISKS

1. Switch to safer products

The main source of health problems in nail salons are the chemicals found in many of the products used. Work with the salon owner and suppliers to remove the products that cause health problems. This is a very important step that will benefit the health and safety of people who work in nail salons and their customers.

When selecting gloves, nitrile gloves are preferred. Regular exposure to latex can lead to skin and/or respiratory problems in people who previously did not have problems.

2. Improve ventilation

Ventilation is the process by which air is purposely delivered to, and removed from, a space. Natural ventilation is when air is brought in from outdoors through opening doors and windows. Mechanical ventilation involves installing fans, ducts and other equipment to draw air in and out of a room and evenly distribute air throughout the space. Even when natural ventilation is available, mechanical ventilation is also important since it can provide more consistent and controlled air flow.

Using proper ventilation systems and opening doors and windows to help air circulation in the salon can reduce chemical and dust exposure for everyone in the salon.

Types of ventilation

Ceiling-mounted or wall-mounted **general** exhaust fans (venting outdoors) are an important requirement in any nail salon. They will help to dilute the concentration of chemicals in the air, but they do not remove them as effectively as local exhaust systems.

Local exhaust ventilation (also called “bench ventilation” or “source capture”) is the best form of ventilation to protect your health and that of the clients. This is a system where the fumes and dust particles are pulled away at the source of your work, preventing it from getting into the air and then into your lungs. It is important that the capture occurs close to your work and that the air is sent to the outdoors through a duct system.



3. Personal Protective Equipment

Personal protective equipment (PPE) will NOT completely protect you from the chemicals, but it may reduce the level of exposure.

If hazardous chemicals exist in the workplace, and if it is not possible or practical to improve the ventilation at this time, using PPE is the next best option.

Some nail technicians wear dust masks or surgical masks. These masks may reduce exposure to large dust particles and reduce exposure to germs, but they do not protect against chemical exposures and small dust particles and they need to be changed often.



An N95 respirator mask can provide more protection than a dust or surgical mask. An N95 respirator mask can protect against both large and small dust particles and germs, but they do not protect against chemical exposures. They require proper fit testing by a trained fitter to ensure they create a proper seal, and they require frequent replacement.

OTHER WAYS TO REDUCE YOUR CHEMICAL EXPOSURE IN THE SALON



1. Use dispenser bottles (e.g., for nail polish, polish remover, etc.) that have small openings. When bottles are not in use, make sure they are closed.
2. Put cotton balls with liquid nail products on them in sealed bags before putting them in the trash.
3. Use trash cans with lids. Empty trash cans regularly and change trash liners regularly.
4. Transfer liquid nail products from large to small dispensing bottles in a well-ventilated area.
5. Take breaks whenever possible and move to where the air is fresher, particularly when doing long procedures like applying artificial nails.

The Lung Association and **Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers** can help to connect salon owners with an occupational hygienist who can advise on the best ways to improve air quality in 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.

The Lung Association (Ontario)

Work-related asthma resources are available in several languages.

18 Wynford Dr, Suite 401

Toronto, ON M3C 0K8

 Tel: 416 864-9911

www.lungontario.ca

Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers (Toronto clinic)

970 Lawrence Ave West, Suite 110

Toronto, ON M6A 3B6

 Tel: 416-449-0009

Toll free: 1-877-817-0336

www.ohcow.on.ca

Workplace Safety and Prevention Services

An information source for safety training and compliance; can provide fitting for N95 masks.

5110 Creekbank Rd,

Mississauga, ON L4W 0A1


 Toll free: 1-877-494-9777

www.wsps.ca

HEALTH SERVICES

Parkdale Queen West Community Health Centre

Services in English,
translation available

 416-703-8480 ext 2233

168 Bathurst St., Toronto

1229 Queen St. West, Toronto

www.pqwchc.org

IWHC Toronto (formerly Immigrant Women's Health Centre)

Services in multiple languages

489 College St., Suite 200, Toronto

 416-323-9986

www.immigranthealth.info

South Riverdale Community Health Centre

Services in English,
translation available

955 Queen St. East, Toronto

 416-461-1925

www.srchc.ca

LEGAL SERVICES

Canadian Environmental Law Association (CELA)

Services in English

55 University Ave, Suite 1500,
Toronto, ON M5J 2H7

416-960-2284

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.

180 Dundas St W, Suite 1701,
Toronto, ON M5G 1Z8

Toll free: 1-844-971-9674

www.csalc.ca

Parkdale Community Legal Services

Services in English,
translation available

1266 Queen St. West, Toronto

416-531-2411

www.parkdalelegal.org

LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT

Workers' Action Centre

Support for workers and workers rights. Services in multiple languages

720 Spadina Ave. Suite 223,
Toronto, ON M5S 2T9

Workers' Help Line:

416-531-0778

Toll free: 1-855-531-0778

www.workersactioncentre.org

LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT (continued)

Working Women's Community Centre

Services in multiple languages

533A Gladstone Ave., Toronto

416-532-2824

www.workingwomencc.org

Employment Standards Information Centre

416-326-7160

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

Email: tphfeedback@toronto.ca

Ontario Ministry of Labour - Health and Safety Contact Centre

* translation available

Toll free: 1-877-202-0008

www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/es/forms/claim.php



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The views expressed in this publication are those of the Nail Salon Workers Project and do not necessarily reflect those of the Province of Ontario.



Facebook: Healthy Nail Salon Network - Toronto



Twitter: @TOHealthyNails



Contact us at: nailsalonproject@ctchc.com



This resource is also **available online** in English, Chinese and Vietnamese at www.pqwchc.org/nails



**PARKDALE
QUEEN WEST**
Community
Health Centre



Graphic Design
Azza Abbaro
azzaabbaro.com



Illustrations
Bjoern Arthurs
bjoernarthurs.com

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Ontario

B R E A T H E
the lung association