



# Nail Technician's

## ...Tips for Health & Safety

*This kit was first produced in 1998 with the aim of providing accurate information to those working in the industry. Since 1998 there have been a number of changes to occupational health and safety legislation. Amendments to the NSW Occupational Health & Safety Act 2001 now require employers to conduct risk assessments of their work processes, and consult about OH&S matter with their staff. Every industry has health and safety hazards including nail technology. These hazards may come from seemingly insignificant sources such as water on a floor or an instrument used on more than one customer without proper cleaning. Some of these hazards can result in serious injuries or illnesses.*



*What is...*

## Occupational Health and Safety?

Occupational health and safety (OHS) is a planned system of working to prevent illness and injury where you work by identifying and controlling hazards. The law says you must identify the hazards where you are working and decide how dangerous they are. Then you must eliminate the hazard or modify the risk that it presents.

An essential part of any OHS program is risk management. This is a logical step-by-step approach, which, if followed, can reduce the likelihood of injury and disease in the workplace.

Always try to assess every single task in terms of risk: that is, identify the hazard, assess the risk and do something to either eliminate or reduce it. For example if you were going to apply an acrylic nail to a customer what could be the risks involved in doing such a task?

### Briefly the risks could involve:

- \*Muscular or ligament strain due to a poorly set up workstation;
- \*Dermatitis or respiratory problems due to over exposure to the chemicals you are going to use;
- \*The risk of fire if you allow a customer to smoke while you are working.

Once you have identified these risks you must implement control measures. In the above example this may include:

- \*Making sure that the workstation is set up properly so that the operator and the customer have good posture and both are comfortable;
- \*To control the chemical risks it may be necessary to use gloves, goggles or improve the system of ventilation by installing an extraction system or using a ventilated table.

In summary, you should try to record your risk assessments and the new legislation requires that you and your staff can demonstrate that you have gone through the risk assessment process with all the procedures you use in a salon.



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## Hazards for Nail Technicians

*Many of the hazards for a nail technician are the same as for their customers. Some of the most common hazards are:*



### RESPIRATORY PROBLEMS

#### *What are they?*

May include asthma, nose and throat irritations and other breathing difficulties.

Long-term exposure to some chemicals may lead to more serious illnesses such as cancer.

#### *How do you get them?*

We understand that some of the chemicals used in nail technology pose certain risks through overexposure. And direct contact with substances. Long-term consequences of exposure to these substances are really not clear, and so therefore it is best to reduce the risks by minimising the exposure. We know about these dangers because of our reading of the Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS), which are available from the suppliers of the products.

#### *How do you prevent them?*

\*Reduce the amount of dust by changing linen after each client;

\*Good ventilation is essential. This can be achieved by simply opening doors and windows or by more complex methods such as using a dust extraction system or a table with an inbuilt filter. The filters on these tables quickly become clogged with dust and MUST be changed on a regular basis. It should be noted that small particles of dust remain in the air for approximately 30-40 minutes;

\*A dust mask may reduce exposure to a certain amount of particles.

The MSDS should tell you information about what type of precautions you need to take when using chemicals for nail technology.

#### *Vapours can also be reduced by:*

\*Replacing lids on all containers after use;

\*Using UV light activated products where the product is cured by a light source, rather than evaporation, and so the vapours are not released into the air;

\*Frequently emptying rubbish.

### DERMATITIS

#### *What is it?*

Dermatitis is an inflammatory condition of the skin and can result from constant hand washing and exposure to water and chemicals commonly used by nail technicians. Symptoms can include redness, itchiness, and swollen skin.

#### *How do you get it?*

Dermatitis is caused by the skin reacting to various substances. It may occur through constant hand washing, not drying or moisturising the skin after washing or sensitivity to chemicals used in nail technology such as polymers or acrylics.

#### *How do you prevent it?*

\*Use soap and water to wash;

\*Dry hands thoroughly after washing;

\*Use moisturiser to prevent dryness;

\*Avoid skin contact with any product;

\*Ensure that nail wipes, and desk mats are changed regularly to avoid build up of product;

\*Use disposable gloves and change after each client.

### EYE INJURIES

#### *What are they?*

Eye injuries are damage to the eyes, which may occur through chemicals or foreign objects coming in contact with the eyes. This can result in permanent eye damage.

#### *How do you get them?*

Because of the nature of tasks involved in nail technology there is always a risk of dust from filing or electric filing/drilling entering the eye or even chemical splashes.

#### *How do you prevent them?*

\*Wear goggles with front and side wall protection;

\*Avoid wearing eye contact lenses in the salon. Contact lenses prevent proper cleaning of the eye after an accidental splash, they also trap dust and vapours will collect in soft contacts and make them unwearable;

\*Always wash hands before touching the eye;

\*Have an eyebath and eye solution close by.

### OCCUPATIONAL OVERUSE INJURIES

#### *What is it?*

Nail technicians can suffer from muscular and/or ligament strains and soft tissue injuries such as Carpel Tunnel Syndrome, lower back pain and neck and shoulder problems

#### *How do you get it?*

This can result from a poorly set up workstation, continuous and /or repetitive movements, and lack of adequate work breaks between clients.

#### *How do you prevent it?*

\*Nail Technicians should have a fully adjustable chair;

\*Use of table mounted work lamps. Tables need to be of adequate width to enable easy access to clients and work materials;

\*Repetitive activity should be broken up and correct work processes should be used. For example, when filing the whole surface of the file should be used with a broad sweeping motion, rather than in a concentrated forceful motion;

\*Adequate breaks should be taken away from the workstation.

### SLIPS, TRIPS AND FALLS

#### *What are they?*

Nail technicians and their clients can sustain serious injuries such as breaks, strains and sprains due to falls in the workplace.

#### *How do these occur?*

Slippery floors due to water or chemical spills, uneven floor surfaces, unsuitable foot wear and/or a cluttered work environment can cause these.

#### *How do you prevent these?*

\*Good housekeeping is essential;

\*Make sure all surfaces are clean and tidy and clean up spills immediately;

\*Floors need to be free from dirt, smooth and non-slip;

\*Comfortable, non-slip footwear should be worn.



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## HOME-BASED SALONS

There is an increasing number of nail technicians who are working from home. Home-based salons can be very successful provided basic health and safety precautions are taken.

The same requirements for health and safety, as outlined above, apply to salon, mobile and home-based nail technicians.

However, there are some additional precautions that need to be taken for home-based and mobile nail technicians:

- Anyone operating from home or visiting people in their own homes needs to register their business with the local council;
- When transporting chemicals in a car they need to be kept cool and ensure that lids are secured. An esky or cooler is recommended for transporting and storing chemicals in a vehicle;

- Children, particularly young toddlers and babies can pose further health and safety issues when working in a private home or a mobile salon. Children should be supervised at all times and all chemicals should be kept well out of their reach. When chemicals are not in use they should be stored in a locked cabinet;

- Adequate ventilation and the correct set-up of the workplace in the home environment can also pose a difficulty;

- Ask your insurance company if your insurance covers you to go from place to place.

Home-based operators need to be aware of all these factors and more when deciding to set up their business.



## WORKERS COMPENSATION AND INJURY MANAGEMENT

*It is the law in NSW that if you employ workers and if you are an employee of your own company then you must have workers compensation insurance to cover your employees or yourself in the event of an accident. Not having this insurance means that you could incur a fine or even prosecution by WorkCover NSW. If an injury does occur to your employee then it is the law that you report this injury to your insurance company and, if they are away from their normal duties for 7 days or more, a separate notification is required to WorkCover NSW. For further information on this you should call WorkCover on 131050. If you have an employee who is injured you must devise an 'injury management plan' for them. Your insurance company can help you do this.*



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## preventing DISEASE

Skin that is intact, without cuts, abrasions or lesions is a natural protective barrier against infection. Infection can occur if equipment that pierces or penetrates the skin is contaminated, or can occur from direct person-to-person contact with blood or other body substances. Unhygienic practices may affect the health of both client and nail technician. Cuts and wounds have the potential to transmit bacterial and fungal infections, as well as viral infections such as HIV, hepatitis B and hepatitis C.

**Cuticle cutting is not a recommended practice in nail technology.** If you do cut cuticles your premises must be registered with the local council and you must follow NSW Health Department's Guidelines on Skin Penetration. Under the NSW Public Health (Skin Penetration) Regulation 2000 skin penetration operators and their premises must meet a number of public health requirements including being able to sterilise equipment and tools, wearing single use gloves and registration with their local council as a skin penetration business (see Resources list at the end of the Kit).

Skin infections can also occur without breaking the skin. For this reason, all equipment and tools must be cleaned between each client to eliminate the potential to spread infection. Equipment or tools that come in contact with skin can spread staphylococcal, streptococcal and pseudomonal infections, all of which are bacterial infections. Other types of skin infections can include herpes (a viral infection), ringworm or tinea (fungal infections), scabies (a form of mite infestation).

Micro-organisms are everywhere – they live on skin, in food and dirt. They are easily spread between clients and technicians by contact with unwashed hands, soiled equipment and tools, or contact with blood and body substances.

Micro-organisms can be present, even after cleaning has removed all visible soil and stains. To prevent the transfer of micro-organisms, operators must perform procedures in a safe and hygienic environment by maintaining clean premises, tools and equipment and by following standard precautions for infection control.

### Standard Precautions for infection control

Standard precautions assume that all blood and other body substances are potential sources of infection. These precautions involve the use of barriers and practices to protect clients and operators from exposure to potentially infectious blood and other body substances.

### Hand washing

Hand washing and hand care are the first steps in any infection control program. Hand washing is the most effective means of reducing the transmission of infectious diseases – not the application of proprietary products. Cuts and abrasions on exposed skin should be covered by a waterproof dressing which should be changed as necessary and when soiled.

**The surface of the hands and nails must be cleaned immediately before and after treatment of each client.**

To protect both the technician and the client from micro-organisms, hands must be cleaned:

- \*Before and after each client;
- \*After contact with blood or body substance;

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## TRANSMISSION

- \*Immediately prior to putting on, or immediately after taking off a new pair of gloves;
- \*After touching the nose or mouth or after going to the toilet;
- \*Before and after eating, drinking or smoking;
- \*Before and after treating wounds or handling soiled wound dressings.

When cleaning hands, remember:

- \*Wet hands;
- \*Use soap and warm running water, rub hands vigorously;
- \*Wash hands all over, including backs of hands, wrists, thumbs and between fingers for 15-20 seconds;
- \*Rinse hands well;
- \*Thoroughly dry hands with a single use paper towel.

Nailbrushes should not be used for cleaning hands as they may damage the skin. Where clean running water is unavailable for washing hands, an alternative is to use a waterless alcohol-based antiseptic hand cream, liquid, or foam.

If alcohol-based hand rubs are used for cleaning hands, the cleanser must be used in the same circumstances as when hand washing is required e.g. before attending a client. A sufficient quantity of cleanser must be used to allow for the entire surface of the hands, fingers and wrists to be cleaned. Hands should be allowed to air dry.

### Bleeding and spills

If a client or a member of staff accidentally gets cut or begins to bleed, follow these steps:

- \*Put on clean disposable gloves (if not already using them);
- \*Place a clean dressing on the wound and apply pressure to stop the bleeding;
- \*If necessary seek medical assistance;
- \*Place soiled disposable equipment and tools into waste disposal or place equipment or tools in a location for cleaning and clean as soon as possible;
- \*Clean the work surfaces and floors of all blood and soiled material with warm water and detergent;
- \*Dispose of soiled cloths and dressings as soon as possible.

### Cleaning equipment

All equipment and tools must be cleaned before they are re-used. Single use equipment or tools should not be reused but disposed of properly. Cleaning greatly reduces the micro-organisms on dirty items but does not necessarily remove all bacteria or viruses. All surfaces must be cleaned and rinsed thoroughly and regularly, especially after each client and after spills or soiling.

**Cleaning is the physical removal of dirt from equipment and tool surfaces by washing in detergent and warm water to reduce the number of micro-organisms.**

If an ultrasonic cleaner is to be used, the items must be cleaned manually beforehand. An ultrasonic cleaner does not disinfect or sterilise.

### Disinfection

All equipment and tools must be cleaned prior to disinfection.

**Disinfection is the killing of disease causing micro-organisms, except bacterial spores. Disinfection is NOT a substitute for cleaning or sterilisation.**

Disinfection can be either by thermal or chemical methods. Thermal disinfection uses heat to kill micro-organisms (except bacterial spores) and is suitable for equipment used in nail technology. Effective thermal disinfection temperatures and times are outlined in the Australian Standard (AS) 4815:2001.

Chemical disinfectants should be listed with the Australian Register of Therapeutic Goods (ARTG). A chemical disinfectant on the ARTG will have a 'registration certificate' issued by the Therapeutic Goods Administration.

Some disinfectants may be harmful to human health. Check the manufacturer's MSDS prior to using, and always follow the manufacturer's instructions for handling, storage and dilution and contact times required.

### Sterilisation

All equipment and tools used to penetrate the skin must be sterilised. Few nail technicians have access to sterilising facilities. The recommended method for sterilising is by using an autoclave.

**Sterilisation is the killing of all micro-organisms including spores.**

Any tools or equipment used in cutting cuticles must be sterilised before it is re-used. Sterilisation must be done in an autoclave.

## TRAINING

*It is recommended that all nail technicians should hold an industry recognised certificate of their qualifications.*

*If you are unsure of your current qualifications as a Nail Technician, an assessment of your qualifications can be made by participating in the APFA Platinum Technician Accreditation programme (\*see information note at the end of this publication).*

*As technology changes, so should you!*

*Nail Technicians are professionals and with that comes the responsibility of updating both technical and practical skills regularly. This can be achieved in a number of ways including: attending seminars, participating in workshops and enrolling in advanced training courses.*



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## CHEMICAL SAFETY

### What is it?

Nail technicians use a wide range of chemical products. To minimize the risk of injury or illness it is essential that these products are stored, labelled and used correctly. WorkCover requires that all employers who work with chemicals must do risk assessments, to identify, assess and control the risks with using these products.

### Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS):

This is information, which legally must be provided by the supplier to the Nail Technician with each hazardous substance purchased. These sheets contain important information concerning the product, its ingredients, use, first aid, storage, and emergency contact numbers;

If you have any problems obtaining MSDS information from a supplier please contact WorkCover on 131050;

The Material Safety Data Sheet will tell you how to use the product safely, giving instructions on personal protective equipment (PPE) such as gloves, aprons and masks;

It will also contain information on first aid, which may be required if there is a spill or if a product is accidentally swallowed.

### CHEMICAL STORAGE

The Material Safety Data Sheet will tell you how to store products correctly.

For example:

- \*Keep chemicals in a cool dark protected area;
- \*Never store chemicals near food;

\*Never leave containers open after use;

\*Chemicals, which are emptied into other containers, should still be labelled correctly and also must NEVER be placed in containers, which were once used for food and drink. This also includes cleaning products as well as those substances used in nail technology;

\*Chemicals should always be stored away from children;

\*Many chemicals used by nail technicians are highly flammable. This means that no one should ever smoke near these products and storage of the chemicals should be well away from heat or any source of flame;

\*Never carry or store any product in a car or car boot, both will act as an oven;

\*Never pack any product in your luggage when travelling by air. Transporting of flammable materials on passenger aircraft is against the law.

Due to the potential for these chemicals to cause problems it is essential that they be disposed of properly. Your local council can provide information on how to dispose of chemicals properly. At no time should chemicals be mixed together in a waste container while waiting to be disposed of properly.

### FIRST AID

If an accident should occur, it is essential that the nail technician be prepared for such an event. This means having a good working knowledge of the MSDS for the chemicals used in the salon so that appropriate first aid can be given, having a well-stocked first aid kit with eye baths, and a fire extinguisher.



# Better than 99% dust removal



## Nail Technicians Invest in Your Future Health



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## RESOURCES

### Department for Women

The NSW Department for Women is a state government department whose purpose is to act as a key agent in improving the economic and social wellbeing of women.



The Department for Women works with other government and non-government organisations to achieve improved opportunities and conditions for NSW women.

Telephone: 1800 817 227

Website: [www.women.nsw.gov.au](http://www.women.nsw.gov.au)

### The Australian Professional Fingernail Association (APFA)

APFA is the peak national professional body for nail technologists. It is the only professional association in Australia dedicated to nail technology. APFA's current president is Mrs Karen Murray.



APFA promotes the industry as a highly skilled professional service to the consumer and determines standards of practice in the industry by setting, co-ordinating and controlling minimum qualifications for industry practitioners.

For information about courses and seminars or accreditation, contact the National APFA office on:

Telephone: 1300 309 036 or

Email: [enquiry@apfa.net.au](mailto:enquiry@apfa.net.au) Website: [www.apfa.net.au](http://www.apfa.net.au)

### WorkCover

WorkCover manages the State's workplace safety, injury management and workers compensation systems to achieve safe workplaces, effective returns to work and security for injured workers. It administers the Workers Compensation Act 1987, Workplace Injury Management and Workers Compensation Act 1998, Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S) Act 2000, the Factories, Shops and Industries Act 1962, Dangerous Goods Act 1975, Workers Compensation (Bush Fire, Emergency & Rescue Services) Act 1987 and the Regulations and Codes of Practice under those Acts.



Publications on the OH&S Act 2000, OH&S Regulation 2001 and on Consultation, Risk Management and Hazardous Substances can be obtained from any WorkCover office, ordered by phone or downloaded from the website.

Telephone: 131050

Email: [workcover@nsw.gov.au](mailto:workcover@nsw.gov.au) Website: [www.workcover.nsw.gov.au](http://www.workcover.nsw.gov.au)

### NSW Health

NSW Health has a range of fact sheets and information on infectious diseases, skin penetration guidelines and code of best practice, and information on infection control.



Contact your local public health unit, part of your area health service, or NSW Health website for information.

Telephone: (02) 9391 9000

Website: [www.health.nsw.gov.au](http://www.health.nsw.gov.au)

### Acknowledgements/Bibliography

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## CONSULTATION

*The Occupational Health and Safety Act 2000 states that it is compulsory for employers to have some form of active consultation with workers. If you are a large employer this may mean having a safety committee at the workplace, for smaller employees this may mean having a health and safety representative. In all situations it means that employers must be able to demonstrate some form of meaningful discussion with their employees particularly in regard to safety issues. This is well discussed in the WorkCover Code of Practice on Consultation (Booklet available from WorkCover).*

*The kit is sponsored by:*

