

Module 14 : Health and Hygiene

- About ensuring your premises is clean and fit for use
- How to make sure you keep your area well ventilated
- About keeping your equipment safe and hygienic
- About public health bodies you should be familiarising yourself with

By the end of this chapter, you will know:

- About ensuring your premises is clean and fit for use
- How to make sure you keep your area well ventilated
- About keeping your equipment safe and hygienic
- About public health bodies you should be familiarising yourself with

14.1: Keeping Work Areas Well Ventilated as a Nail Technician



On a daily basis, nail technicians come into contact with a broad range of toxic chemicals.

According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC) in the U.S., overexposure to these chemicals has been associated with respiratory and neurological conditions. While the nature of these studies is quite small, their contents cannot be ignored, which means you have a duty to yourself as a nail technician to stay safe.

Your work station, when performing manicures and other hand treatments, directly exposes you to chemicals that waft upwards. As such, you may find that you are breathing them in on an almost constant basis. To ensure this is not a problem, you need to make sure the area is well ventilated. If you are managing your own salon, this is your personal responsibility. If, on the other hand, your salon has a manager, they're legally obligated to ensure you receive adequate ventilation. If, at any point, you do not feel as though you are receiving adequate ventilation, you need to address the issue.

Self-employed persons need to do this themselves, but if you are working for a salon manager it is not your responsibility. Instead, you need to discuss the issue with them and request that they alter the ventilation in their premises.

If they refuse to do this, they are not acting legally and are ignoring their obligations as an employer.

14.2: Ensuring your Premises is Clean and Fit for Use



Nail technicians carry out activities that involve penetration of the skin.

As discussed in earlier modules, the nails are (essentially) an extension of the skin. When you oil and push back the cuticles, you are penetrating a protective barrier that prevents infection.

Because of this penetration, you need to make sure your premises is hygienic. If you are working for a salon, this is something the manager should be organising anyway.

However, if you are operating your own mobile facilities or planning on opening your own salon, you need to do the following:

- Make sure there is a hand basin with flowing water for you to wash your hands in. In addition, you need hand sanitiser and soap (make sure the hand soap you are using kills 99.9% of bacteria).
- You also need a separate source of clean running water for cleaning equipment. Using the same source for washing your hands and your equipment can lead to cross-contamination.

- A constant supply of liquid hand soap. Alongside this, you should try and have hand sanitiser. To ensure your hands stay soft, you may also want to include a little moisturiser on-site specifically for your hands.
- Towels breed bacteria, which means yours should be single use, or you should have an automatic hand dryer.
- You also need to wear attire that places a barrier between you and pathogens you could pass onto clients. This includes disposable aprons and gloves. Changing these items between clients makes sure you do not accumulate bacteria then pass it onto them.
- Finally, you need a waste disposal bin. You need to empty this bin on a regular basis and sanitise it each time you do.

14.3: Personal Hygiene for Nail Technicians

Alongside keeping a clean environment, there are basic personal hygiene requirements you need to pay attention to.

This includes:

- Maintain good personal hygiene e.g. ensure showers and uniform are under control. Make sure you are smelling fresh for your client and always use a clean uniform. You are in close contact with your client, so if you can smell it, they can smell it!
- Always wear gloves and an apron during skin penetration procedures, which means always wearing them when you are addressing the cuticles.
- Wash your hands between clients; between procedures; when you are exposed to body substances; when you have touched a client; after you have removed gloves.
- If you have any cuts or wounds, seal them with a waterproof bandage.

14.4: Keeping your Equipment Safe and Hygienic

Just like you and your work station, your equipment can harbour harmful pathogens.

Therefore, you need to do the following:

- Clean, dry and store equipment adequately
- If you use reusable items, you need to ensure they are properly sterilised, and you need to do this using an on-site steriliser
- Before using a steriliser, all equipment needs to be thoroughly hand washed and scrubbed
- If equipment is difficult to wash or sterilise, you should only use it once and then dispose of it
- Towels that are used for procedures should only be used once before cleaning them thoroughly

14.5: Basic Salon Hygiene Procedures

To boost your efforts, there are certain salon hygiene procedures you need to follow.

This includes:

- Cleaning your workstation between clients.
- To limit the risk of creams and other liquids causing cross contamination you need to decant them into separate containers with each and every client.
- Only ever open sterile packaging just before beginning a treatment.
- When using equipment that is designed to penetrate the skin, do not touch the end of it that serves this purpose. Keep your fingers at the other end.

14.6: Public Health Bodies to Familiarise Yourself With

Here in the UK there is a whole range of public health bodies that can help you do your job better.

This includes:

- Public Health England

- Public Health Wales
- The Scottish Public Health Network
- The Public Health Agency for Northern Ireland

Each of these agencies has its own local guidelines for a range of businesses, salons included.

Learning more about their unique guidelines can help you ensure you adhere to relevant legislation, thus keeping yourself and your clients safe.

Not adhering to public health guidelines is not just dangerous for you and your clients, it is illegal.

While not everyone operates perfectly all the time, willfully acting outside of health and safety guidelines can lead to fines and criminal prosecution.

In order to ensure this does not become a problem, you (or your salon manager) need to:

- Pay close attention to health and safety at all times
- Become familiar with the basics of health and safety legislation
- Understand the local regulations ordained by the above bodies
- Have public liability insurance just in case something does go wrong

As stated, everyone makes mistakes. It is when you are purposefully not paying attention to health and safety that your mistakes become a problem for yourself and those around you.

Great health and safety practices are easy to adopt, whereas excellent health and safety becomes a habit when you consistently pay attention to what you are doing.

14.7: Health and Safety at Work Act

The Health and Safety at Work Act was released in 1974 outlining occupational health and safety in the UK.

The Act was devised by the Health and Safety Executive and is enforced by local authorities. There have been amendments to the Act since the 1970s as a means of covering new industries, as well as new subjects that have been deemed hazardous. When working with sharp instruments like nail cutters, cuticle tools, and around water that can have cross contamination or sterilisation issues, it is important to maintain health and safety at work.

Furthermore, there are guidelines stated in the Act with regards to working around certain things that must be enforced by the owner of the nail salon, as well as local authorities who will come in to conduct inspections.

Health and Safety Requirements

The Health and Safety Act 1974 states that every employer must ensure, as far as is practical, that the health, welfare, and safety of employees is in place at all times. For a nail salon an employer must provide a safe environment to work including proper labelling, storage, and training for nail technicians with regards to items and procedures that could be hazardous. There must be an absence of risk to an employee's health when it comes to using, handling, and storing substances used in a nail salon. Supervision is necessary to ensure proper health and safety.

An employer must provide facilities and arrangements at work that protect employee welfare as far as reasonably practical to avoid health and safety issues. For a nail business this includes making the work areas easy to clean, to walk around, and hygienically safe.

Practical Health and Safety for Employees

There are very real risks to the health and safety of employees as well as clients at a nail salon. Health issues of clients can include eczema, athlete's foot, and other fungal problems. As clients will use the same footbaths, hand baths, and the employee will use their same manicure/pedicure set, it is important for employees to have a safe and workable location to keep their instruments, as well as the baths clean from contamination.

This starts with the employer providing proper cleaning supplies and a workable space that allows for easy upkeep of all equipment and instruments used for nails. An environment that makes it difficult to clean the footbaths or hand baths, plus the instruments between appointments is contrary to the Health and Safety Act and therefore unlawful.

Storage of instruments, baths, and other materials used in the salon must follow health and safety regulations, including keeping the chemicals used in a nail salon separate and clearly marked to avoid any issues.

14.8: COSHH

Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) is part of the Health and Safety Executive laws regarding health and safety in the work place.

Employers are required by law to control any substances in the workplace that may be hazardous to health. Employers are meant to prevent or reduce an employee's exposure to harmful chemicals.

Employers must find out what the hazards are, conduct a risk assessment, provide measures of control, and check to see that the substances are being used safely. Employers must also provide information, training and instruction to employees and other individuals who may be around the chemicals.

Monitoring and health surveillance is also required by law as is setting up a plan for any

emergencies that might arise.

Working as a nail technician, employees will come into contact with various substances including cleaning chemicals, nail products, and dirty water.

It is the employer's responsibility not only with health and safety to provide a work friendly environment regarding these possible health hazards, but also to ensure nail technicians are properly trained on the chemicals and substances they will be using.

For cleaning chemicals an employer needs to go over how to use the substance, when to use it, how much to use, and any specific instructions. For example, if using bleach as a cleaning agent, the employee needs to understand the requirements for using gloves with bleach as well as the dilution ratio of bleach and water to ensure proper health and safety.

Many of the nail substances such as nail polish remover, nail polish, and decorations are made from chemical processes which include chemical ingredients that could be hazardous. Employers are responsible for over-viewing proper usage of these substances, as well as what not to do around them. Although the industry has changed as to the components of nail polish and nail polish remover, there are still astringent properties that can be harmful if inhaled.

Signs for Employees

Employers are required by COSHH laws to have proper signage with regards to hazardous chemicals, risk management assessments, and emergency plans. Signs and handbooks need to include what to do in case of fire or other emergency, as well as how to handle exposure to chemicals through an accidental spill.

Employers are required to train employees when first hired and to provide retraining throughout their employment to ensure proper COSHH basics are being adhered to in the work place at all times.

14.9: Hygiene Control for Cross Infection/Sterilisation

Whether you are the owner, manager or nail technician it is your responsibility to ensure hygiene control is in place for cross infection/sterilisation.

People come in from all different situations to get manicures and pedicures. Someone might have worked all day at an office, in a field, or just sat at home. Another person might have walked with bare feet all day and hardly washed their hands.

Unfortunately, disease is easily transferred particularly bacterial infections. It is possible for certain toenail and nail fungus to be transferred given the right conditions. It is up to you to understand the particular hygiene issues the client might have.

This section is not going to focus on the infections you can obtain from a client or that can become a cross infection. Instead, it will examine the hygiene practises you need to have in place to avoid cross infection. The plan you need to have in place is proper sterilisation after each and every client.

Sterilisation

All items that you use for yourself or clients need to be properly sterilised. There are different areas that will require different procedures which will be examined.

Towels

Towels and linens are one way to have cross infection from one client to another in a nail salon. Microbial infections can latch onto a towel and if used again before it is properly clean, another client can succumb to the infection. You need to have a proper area for cleaning towels where the towels are washed and dried. The minimum heat for drying towels is 70 degrees C.

When the towels are no longer coming clean or are damaged it is the nail salon's responsibility to dispose of the towels and replace them with new ones. As clients can have a range of allergies it is best to choose a washing soap that is fragrance free and all natural.

Equipment

Water for rinsing out the footbaths, hand baths and other equipment must be at least 70 degrees C. It is also important to use a bleach product. A commercial cleaning product sold specifically for nail salons should be on hand. If there is a mixture requirement, a manager should be in charge of proper proportions to ensure all safety is maintained.

It can be used in a spray bottle for an even cleaning; however, the chemical should never be pointed towards a client or be in an area where a draft or fan could push the spray over to the client. Using the cleaning chemical, proper rinse water at the right temperature, and a clean towel to dry the equipment is necessary. This must be done after each use.

Instruments

There are various instruments that you will use during the process of a manicure or pedicure. You need to have a set for the pedicure and a set for the manicure to avoid cross infection from feet to hands or vice versa. If you use metal nail files they must be cleaned and sanitised after each use. If you do not use metal nail files then you may need to replace your files after each use.

Other materials can take too long to dry out and they must be dry before you can reuse them. You also need to wash the files each time you have a client again to avoid cross infection. However, since you wash the hands and feet regulations will allow you to reuse nail files and buffers – for clients it is really a better option to have multiple sets so one can be cleaned and drying rather than reusing it over and over again.

A chemical bath such as a bleach water or nail salon product needs to be used for sanitising the instruments you use. The type of chemical must meet the health and safety as well as COSHH standards.

There are green products that are less harmful that can be used for sanitising all towels, equipment and instruments. It is the choice of the owner and they must meet regulations.

Go and Practice

Estimated time: 30 minutes

Print out the attachment and make a list of health and hygiene items that will affect either you or your clients. Next to each item write out the steps you would put in place to overcome these health and hygiene issues.

[Download Worksheet](#)

Module Summary

In this module you learned more about the importance of health and safety in a salon environment.

This included information on why ventilation is essential. In addition, you found out how to maintain a healthy salon environment for yourself and your clients.

Other aspects of this module included personal hygiene, why you need to wear gloves, and information on public health bodies in the UK and their role in helping you maintain salon hygiene.

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