

9 Things You Can Do Now to Get Stronger, Healthier Nails ASAP

Rihanna, Beyoncé, Zendaya, Gwen, and—well, every Kardashian—has 'em. Long, strong [nails](#) are the very definition of #beautygoals. But actually getting them to the point you desire before they break off in uneven pieces is *much* easier said than done (especially if you're trying to go au naturel). Daily wear and tear lead to hangnails and snags and polish and gel changes can weaken your tips over time. So how to actually grow nails out and keep them long? We chatted with manicurist Deborah Lippmann and Chanel celebrity manicurist Ashlie Johnson along with **North Carolina-based dermatologist and nail specialist Dr. Chris G. Adigun** to gather the best advice for stronger, healthier, RiRi-level nails. Listen up!

Maintain and hydrate your cuticles

Remember this: Healthy cuticles equal healthy nails. “The main habit to break is picking, trimming or manipulating your cuticles in *any* way,” says **Dr. Adigun**. Cuticles act as both a seal and a barrier, keeping in hydration and keeping out possible infections. “Nail growth starts in the area called the matrix—it’s right below your cuticle line and very important for keeping the nail healthy and hydrated,” Johnson says. “Your cuticles are the last line of defense, acting as a shield blocking the spread of bacteria from moving in on the nail,” Lippmann explains. “Cutting them can potentially irritate or infect the nail.” To avoid both, gently push them back instead of trimming.

Skip the nail hardeners

While it may seem like a good idea to reach for a hardener that promises stronger nails, it actually can do more damage than good. “They often cause nails to become so hard that they crack and break more easily,” **Dr. Adigun**

explains.

Moisturize more

Dry hands are a major problem when it comes to maintaining nail strength and health. “Women don’t think that their nails and hands need to be treated like the skin on their face,” Lippmann says. “It wouldn’t occur to most women to wash their face and not apply a moisturizer, but they wash their hands over and over and don’t apply lotion.” Dr. Adigun says “greasier” products such as [Vaseline](#) and [Aquaphor](#) are most effective because they seal in the moisture, but if you’re not into the Crisco feeling while you’re tapping on a keyboard, apply them only at night and use a lighter creams with dimethicone or ceramides during the day. Also: use a cuticle moisturizer every day (we like Essie [Apricot Cuticle Oil](#), \$9). Ditto if you’ve exposed nails to drying solvents like acetone.

File strategically

Keeping nails at a length that’s functional for your day-to-day life helps prevent breakage and tearing. When you file your nails, make sure you’re doing it correctly. “Shaping your nails may seem like a mindless activity, but it can actually weaken and break your nails if executed improperly,” Lippmann explains. Use a fine grit file, start on the outside edge and pull towards the center—then continue to gently swipe across your nail in that one direction. Don’t saw the file back and forth, which creates too much friction and gives you frayed edges that catch and snag easily. Lippmann also recommends holding the file tilted underneath the tip. “This prevents overfilling by allowing you to see exactly what you are doing,” she says.

Always wear a base coat

Even if you don’t have time for a full manicure, applying a hydrating and strengthening base coat can prevent the nails from peeling and becoming weak. Johnson favorite: [Chanel Le Base](#), \$28. “It’s packed with ceramides and

peptides to fortify nails and promote growth,” she explains. Dr. Adigun also recommends [Dermelect Makeover](#), \$16, which has a keratin protein peptide for stronger tips.

Maintain a balanced diet

Just like your skin and hair, what you eat can also affect your nails. Dr. Adigun suggests upping your protein (get it from pork, broccoli, and lentils), biotin (eggs, salmon, peanuts), zinc (green beans, shellfish, cashews) and iron (beef, spinach, kale) intakes for better nails. She also recommends avoiding a ketogenic diet, which is low in carbohydrates and high in fat (think: Atkins), due to the biotin depletion it promotes within the body. (If you’re prescribed this diet for medical purposes take biotin supplements to replace the loss.) Also, you might want to steer clear of the vending machine, she says—a recent [Dutch study](#) showed improvement in nail growth among subjects that maintained an organic, minimally-processed diet.

Consider supplements

“Nails tend to show the first signs of a vitamin deficiency,” explains Johnson. Try adding supplements such as [Biotin NeoCell Biotin Bursts](#), \$19 or Omega 3. And although it’s primarily used for hair growth, Johnson says she’s seen great results on nails with [Viviscal](#), \$50.

Exfoliate regularly

“I believe nails need to be exfoliated on a regular basis to maintain their strength and health,” Lippmann says. To do so, use a nail buffer like [Deborah Lippmann’s Smooth Operator 4-Way Nail Buffer](#), \$12 on the surface of your nails in gentle, circular motions to smooth and brighten beds. But—in the same way that you don’t want to over-exfoliate your skin—you should buff only once a week.

Get regular manicures

...As if you needed any excuse. “Manicures remove the rough edges, dry cuticles, and hangnails we tend to pick at and get caught on things,” Johnson says. However, make sure the treatment is gentle. “Nails and cuticles are much more delicate than people realize.”

For more nail care tips, check out:

- [You're Putting on Glitter Nail Polish All Wrong](#)
- [7 Game-Changing Nail Secrets Only Manicurists Know](#)
- [15 Nail Salon Mistakes That Could Be Secretly Wrecking Your Mani](#)