

Doc warns that popular gel manicure is a 'cancer risk'



CAUTION: Ashley Delea of Brooklyn dries her nail gel yesterday at Fox & Jane salon on the Lower East Side. Photo: NY Post: Chad Rachman

Pricey gel manicures that prevent nails from chipping are all the rage — but they can actually increase the risk of skin cancer, according to a disturbing warning from a doctor at the NYU School of Medicine.

The lengthy dose of UV light used to dry the gel is known to damage skin cells much the same way as tanning beds, assistant professor of dermatology Dr. Chris Adigun of the Ronald O. Perelman Department of Dermatology says.

“Women who frequently get gel manicures should consider their skin-cancer risk because the UV light needed to cure the gel manicure is a risk factor for skin cancer,” she wrote in a recent article in the *Journal of the American Academy of Dermatology*.

LED lamps are used in drying regular nail polish and don't pose a health risk because they don't emit ultraviolet radiation. Some skin cancers are caused by exposure to certain ultraviolet light.

Having a gel manicure can be so risky that Adigun warns women to apply sunscreen on their hands “to decrease the consequences of chemical trauma.”

“As is the case with most things, moderation is the key when it comes to gel manicures,” she said. “If you get them regularly, you need to be aware of the possible consequences.”

Gel manicures are popular because they don't chip and they last at least twice as long as regular nail polish. They range in price from \$25 to \$45.

Two middle-aged women, who did not have a history of skin cancer, developed tumors on their hands following exposure to UV nail lights, according to research published in *JAMA*

Dermatology in 2009 .

Another concern is that no one knows what is the proper dose of these harmful rays because the UV lamps are not regulated.

Also, because of the its lasting durability, the gel can camouflage nail brittleness, thinning and cracking.

“In general, any manicure left in place for an extended period of time is not a good idea because you are not seeing what is going on underneath the nail polish,” Adigun said.

At the I-Plaza Nail & Spa in TriBeCa, where Katie Holmes is a customer, Min, the general manager, said about 50 percent of his clients ask for a gel manicure.

He offers the option of sunscreen for their \$48 service.

At Fox & Jane salon on the Lower East Side, Jennifer Luna, 29, a hair stylist, has been getting gel manicures every two weeks for the past year. “I probably should wear SPF [sunscreen] when I get it done, but I’m not going to lie — I tan, too, which is probably worse,” she said.

“Maybe I’ll start putting on sunscreen, but maybe I won’t. I’m not really worried, to be honest. I mean, most people are in the sun longer than their nails are under the UV gel dryer.”

Another client, Jamielynn De Leon, 28, said she gets silk wraps instead.

“I care about the risks,” she said. “Everything is cancerous these days it seems, so it’s important that we know the risks so we don’t continue to do it.”

Her wraps cost \$10 more, but she says she doesn’t mind paying for peace of mind.

Bob Bland, 30, a fashion designer from Brooklyn, said she had a bad experience with the gel.

“The one time I got a gel manicure I had it for one day,” she said. “I had to go to a salon to remove it and my nail was almost as soft as skin. It was disgusting. It made me want to never use gel again. It was kind of scary.”

Natasha Paul, owner of Evolution on Atlantic Avenue in Brooklyn, said she discourages clients from using gel, explaining:

“We tell them it isn’t healthy. They bake the product on the nails. The UV rays cause cancer.”