

It's Pedicure Season: 5 Tips for Staying Safe at the Salon



Can I get a show of hands (ummm...feet?) for everyone who decided to rock a pair of sandals in the past week or so ... only to realize that her tootsies were in major need of some salon-style TLC? [Ed. note: Yes, and I'm still rocking sandals. #Gross. - RJ] I'm willing to bet that pedicure business skyrockets in April and May -- and chances are that complications from pedicures, although rare, probably increase, too.

I'm sure we've all heard about that friend of a friend who got some horrible post-pedi infection -- but I wanted to get the facts. So I talked to Chris Adigun, MD, assistant professor dermatology and attending physician at the Nail Clinic at New York University School of Medicine. Good news: She's *not* totally against the idea. "I aspire to get pedicures," the mom of two told me. "If I had the time, I would love to!" Still, there are things you can do to make your time at the salon safer, she says. Here are her top tips.

1. Don't shave your legs the day of or the day before.

Bacteria can live in pipes or water used for pedicure footbaths, even if your salon is clean and chic. Your skin is usually a strong enough barrier to keep the bacteria out, but shaving creates lots of microscopic cuts in your legs. They're too small to see with the naked eye, but big enough to let in potentially dangerous organisms. (Another tip: [This report](#) says footbaths may be cleaner at earlier times during the day.)

2. Embrace the pumice stone.

Say goodbye to those winter calluses! Sloughing off all that dead dermis is totally safe, as

long as your technician doesn't get too carried away. And trust us, you'll feel it if she gets too close to live skin.

3. But skip the cuticle sticks.

Say no to cuticle manipulation; this is another hotspot for infection, either from bacteria in the water or from ingrown toenails that can occur after the fact. And sorry, but bringing your own tools won't do much to reduce your risk: Even if the equipment is sterile, it's the actual act of pushing back and cutting the skin that puts you in danger.

4. Go easy on the gel pedis.

Remember a couple of months ago when we asked if you needed to [go on a gel manicure diet](#)? The same risks that apply to your fingernails, also apply to your toes: Both the UV curing process and the acetone removal can be damaging to nails and skin, so it's best to get these only on occasion. And because the polish can stay on for so long (especially on your toes!), it can hide changes underneath that could signal skin disease or cancer.

5. Don't forget your sunscreen!

Okay, not *during* your pedicure, but definitely after. If you're going to be showing off those newly done nails with a pair of strappy shoes, protect the tops of your feet with a broad-spectrum sunscreen.

Now, for the fun part. [Choosing your new color!](#)

Are you getting a pedicure this weekend? Tweet us a pic at [@amandaemac](#) and [@SELFmagazine](#).

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