



# Nailing it right!

*The promise of acrylic nails seems so comforting – more permanent than a regular polish, easy to maintain and a way to lengthen those short nails. But the side effects can be more critical than you expect! To break down the potential hazards of acrylic nails, **Seoyoung Park** speaks to celebrity cosmetic dermatologist **Dr. Chytra V Anand**.*

**N**ail grooming is a growing industry, but how can you protect your nail health while having nail treatments and using artificial nails? Beauty can be deceiving and the side effects can be long lasting. These are the must-know facts for nail safety if you have decided to get acrylic nails.

- Stop using if rashes or redness occurs. Contact your doctor for advice.
- Follow acrylic nail removal procedure correctly. Get it done by a professional. Never force the removal of acrylic nails from natural nails.
- Do not use acrylic nail products if you suffer from skin diseases/disorders.
- Work in a well-ventilated area, and protect the skin around your nails from the chemicals used during the application process.
- Consider removing your acrylic nails and letting your natural nails breathe every two to three months. If you suspect a nail infection, consult a dermatologist for an evaluation.

### Don't Break the Rules

If you don't follow these rules, you may notice nail deterioration. The dangers associated with acrylic nails are wide and varied, from infection to fungus and possible nail loss. Take a close look at your fingernails. Are they strong and healthy looking? Or do you see ridges, dents or areas of unusual colour or shape? Many less than desirable nail conditions can be avoided through proper fingernail care. Remember, nails can be a mirror of other, more serious health problems. Any abnormal changes to your nails should be medically investigated.

Some of the more common conditions people approach Dr. Chytra with post-acrylic nail art include the following:

- Discolouration
- Ridged nails
- Splitting nails
- Bacterial infection
- Fungal infection
- Lifted nail plate

With a condition known as onycholysis, the fingernails become loose and can separate from the nail bed. Sometimes detached nails are associated with injury or infection. In other cases, nail separation is a reaction to a particular drug or consumer product, such as nail hardeners or adhesives used in nail art.

If this is the condition, you should limit the amount of chemical interaction with the nail bed for a while. You are at risk of further damage by adding thickness and weight to an already fragile nail structure. Let your nails heal before applying any product, even polish! It will take about six months or so for the nail cells that are back at the cuticle to grow all the way out to the tips. A few months of pain, healing nails will be a small price to pay compared to losing a nail plate completely for the rest of your life.

### Tender Loving Care

You can reduce the risk of nail problems in a variety of ways:

- Practise good personal hygiene.
- Wear protective gloves for wet jobs such as washing the dishes.
- Avoid harsh chemicals such as strong soaps and detergents.
- Avoid using acetone nail polish removers; choose the conditioning variety, instead.
- Don't clean under your nails too frequently or too aggressively.
- Resist the urge to bite or tear off hangnails — use nail clippers.
- Don't cut the nails very close to the nail bed. This can cause bleeding and stunt nail growth.
- Remove artificial nails carefully and according to the manufacturer's instructions.
- Moisturise the hands frequently, particularly after washing them.
- Remember to rub the moisturiser over your nails and cuticles too.
- Treat any sign of eczema on your hands promptly.
- To protect yourself from fungal infections, don't share towels; always dry yourself thoroughly after bathing (particularly between the toes). ■

