

Best practice v best finish

In the artificial nail business safer products are available and others are in development. Where possible such products should be used to reduce the risk to staff and customers. However, where the desired finish can only be achieved by using more hazardous products containing EMA, then they can be used providing the precautions listed are adhered to.

By focusing on better hygiene practices and an awareness of the dangers of using the hazardous products mentioned, a relatively risk-free life can be had in the nail enhancement industry without developing serious ill health.

Further Information

For further information please visit www.hse.gov.uk

The following free publications are available from:

HSE Books, PO Box 1999, Sudbury, Suffolk CO10 2WA

Tel: 01787 881165

COSHH – A brief guide to the regulations (INDG 136)

Five Steps to Risk Assessment (INDG 163)

Read the Label (INDG 352)

Respiratory sensitisers and COSHH (INDG 95)

Solvents and You (INDG 252)

This document can be made available in other languages, on tape, in braille, large print and in other formats. For further information please contact 01803 208120.



nail bar



Safety Information



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How artificial fingernails can be dangerous

Artificial fingernail products are made from a variety of chemicals, the most being ethyl methacrylate (EMA). Following concerns over its safety, the United States Food and Drug Administration banned a very similar chemical called methyl methacrylate (MMA). Research had indicated that there was a risk to nail technicians and customers associated with the use of MMA. Whilst not a banned substance, EMA has the ability to cause problems like its counterpart MMA. These effects can include contact dermatitis, asthma and irritation of the eyes and nose, and can affect customers as well as operators. Due to the wide variety of chemicals used in beauty salons, it can be difficult to identify the source of any sensitivity or allergy. Therefore, it is best to minimise and control exposure to such chemicals before sensitisation occurs.

What does the law say?

Under current UK legislation, employers have a duty to ensure the health, safety and welfare of their employees and other persons on their premises. Furthermore, the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 (COSHH) place specific requirements on employers to ensure staff safety. These include:

- to assess the risks
- to control the exposure
- to provide extract ventilation
- to substitute products for less hazardous ones where this is possible
- to provide suitable and sufficient personal protective equipment
- to hold safety data sheets for the chemicals used and to be aware of the risks in their use
- to ensure the chemicals are stored in an appropriate manner
- to provide adequate information, training and supervision of staff.

What can I do to help keep things safe?

There are many things you can do to ensure good practice is observed in your workplace. Here are a few basic tips to get you and your staff started.

- Keep dispenser bottles closed when not in use.
- Ensure you or your staff wear long sleeved coveralls.
- Use workstations with downdraft ventilation to safely remove dust.
- Wear gloves to protect against acrylic dust when removing nails.
- Regularly wash hands, arms and face to remove acrylic dust before eating.
- Ensure used gauze pads and cotton wool that have been soaked in chemicals are disposed of in a sealed bag to prevent fumes.
- Remove rubbish and replace bin liners daily.
- Do not smoke, eat or drink in the treatment area.
- Keep all work surfaces clean by wiping down with a damp cloth.
- Ensure all equipment is sterilised between clients or use new disposable products for each client.

Things to remember

- Always use the correct products for the procedure. Cheap alternatives may be more harmful or cause adverse reactions
- Be aware of your responsibilities under COSHH. Ensure chemicals are used correctly and, where necessary, with the correct personal protective equipment.
- Be aware of the risks of sensitisation, and ensure that the staff know the signs and how to report them.
- Ensure adequate ventilation in the premises, ideally from front to back, as this reduces the amount of harmful chemicals in the air. The use of tables with extract (downdraft) ventilation to the exterior of the building is recommended to remove dust and fumes.

