

# health talk



## What You Should Know Before Getting A Pedicure

By Jennifer Lam - DPodM Chiropodist/Foot Specialist

This winter season appears to be more drawn out, leaving our toes constantly cramped up and sweaty in our winter boots. To relieve ourselves from the winter blues, perhaps more women than men, are flocking to their favourite salons to have their feet pampered.

It may or may not sound familiar to you, but there are many people who have had a pedicure at a salon several days before and to find, a day or two later, they are developing a bacterial infection as a result of an improper cut on the skin or to the nail. As a result, severe pain, swelling and bleeding ensues. Little do people know, an immediate and potentially severe reaction can occur from just a simple visit to the salon. These consequences come with a hefty price tag that is paid for just to have the polished and glamorous look of well-trimmed toenails at a salon.

Salon pedicures can pose real health risks. It is important to beware of the general sterilization practices at the salons as well as your own foot health conditions before your step foot into any of these salons.

Here are some tips when staking out a salon:

- 1) Ensure that salons are disinfecting all their tools and sterilizing them with a sterilizer (also known as an autoclave). If they are using disposable one-time instruments, be sure they are not re-using them for yourself or the next client. Beware that some salons that are running at high capacity may let their standards of cleanliness slip.
- 2) Whirlpool foot baths may be a source for contamination to occur. The motor of such foot baths can harbour fungus and bacteria which can be harmful to your feet. It is much more safer to choose a salon which uses individual basins for their foot baths. As an added protection, basins with a one-time use plastic liner would be more ideal.

3) It is also recommended that you bring your own nail polish or buy new nail polish from the salon. It is likely that the pedicurist will re-dip the nail polish brush into the bottle and re-use with multiple clients. This may increase your exposure to bacterial and fungal infections.

Here are a few things you need to know about your feet before heading out to a salon:

1) If you have an infection, open sore, cut, thin skin that is prone to bleeding or neuropathy (a condition in which you lack sensation to your feet and toes), you may want to seek the advice of a Chiropodist/Foot Specialist before you decide to venture out to a salon.

2) Do remember that your cuticles have a specific function to protect the base of the nail from infections from invading the nail. It is alright to have your cuticles pushed back; however cuticle cutting is not recommended.

3) If you are having a pedicure with cracked heels, you may be leaving your feet to infections. Ensure that their instruments and foot baths are properly disinfected. If you decide to have your calluses reduced, be sure to tell the pedicurist not to cut too deep! Otherwise, the best option would be to seek the services of a Chiropodist/Foot Specialist.

4) If your toenails have a tendency to curl deep into the skin, it is important to instruct the pedicurist not to cut into the side of toenails. They are not medically trained to perform such a task properly. More often than necessary, this is a major source for nail infections to occur!

Be informed and stay safe! For more information regarding your foot health, please feel free to make an appointment to see Jennifer Lam, the Chiropodist/Foot Specialist at the Form and Function Clinic!

# Be informed and stay safe!

