

# Weekend Doctor

By **DR. THOMAS F. VAIL**

Getting a pedicure is an enjoyable pastime, especially during the summer. Even if you get regular podiatric care, it feels good to look down and see perfectly polished toes and feel pampered for an hour or so.

Pedicures may seem harmless, but there are reasons to be concerned. Every year, many people get hurt while getting a pedicure. Some people even get serious bacterial infections that began with a small pedicure injury.

Your podiatrist may not polish your toes, but he will definitely keep your feet and toenails looking healthy all year round. If you still feel like you need to go to the salon or spa, at least be safe. Use these tips to keep your toes pretty and healthy:

## **Know about your health.**

If you are going to get a pedicure, you should definitely know as much as you can about your feet and overall health. Are you a diabetic? Do you have poor circulation? Do you take long to heal? Are you on blood thinners?

These are very important things to consider. Diabetics need to be extremely careful. In fact, it may be best for diabetics to avoid getting pedicures from someone who is not a medical professional.

If you have serious health conditions, ask your podiatrist and doctor if it is OK for you to even get a pedicure. You do not have to tell your pedicurist your whole medical history, but let them know that you have health concerns and infection risks so that they can be extremely careful with your feet. A careless nick from a pedicurist can lead to a long healing sore in some people.

## **Know as much as possible about your pedicurist and salon.**

Be sure that your pedicurist is licensed by the state. The license should be displayed so you can see it.

Check out the salon when you arrive. Is it clean? Does your pedicurist wash her hands before touching you? Does your pedicurist wear gloves? Does the foot bath have a disposable liner? You should ask how often the salon cleans their foot bath and changes the filter if they don't use disposable liners.

Also, look at the tools that your pedicurist uses. Are they clean? Does the pedicurist sterilize them in an autoclave and unwrap them in front of you?

These are all important questions that you need to know.

## **Remember a pedicurist is not a podiatrist.**

Pedicurists are very skilled and know how to make your toes pretty, but, remember, they are not medical professionals.

It may be tempting to let a pedicurist remove a corn, callus or part of a toenail, but just say no. A pedicurist should never use a scalpel on your foot. Even if you trust them and they seem to know what they are doing, the risks are too great.

## **Learn to do it yourself.**

If you see a podiatrist regularly, you will notice that over time your feet and toenails will look better. Once your toenails become more manageable, it may be possible for you to paint your own toenails.

But remember to use nail polishes that don't contain toxic ingredients and are enriched with naturally-occurring elements like tea-tree oil, garlic bulb extract, wheat protein and Vitamins C and E.

Make sure you remove polish regularly to check the health of your toenails. If you notice a change in color or thickness of your nails, make an appointment with your podiatrist. Fungal infections of your nails can spread quickly and become a painful condition if not treated early. They also take months to grow out.

Sometimes beauty is painful, but this does not have to be the case for your feet. Be smart and keep your feet looking their best this summer.



Vail

*Vail is with Advanced Footcare Clinic, Findlay. Questions for Blanchard Valley Health System experts may be sent to Weekend Doctor, The Courier, P.O. Box 609, Findlay, OH 45839.*