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### SALON SAFETY

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A manicure or pedicure should be a pain-free, relaxing experience. Personal care treatments can be dangerous, though, if they aren't performed in clean facilities by properly trained individuals. Your health can be at risk unless sanitation protocol and infection control practices are followed.

We want to keep Virginia safe from skin infection outbreaks that have harmed hundreds of nail salon customers in other states. In addition to periodic inspections of licensed nail salons, DPOR conducts complaint-based site visits to ensure compliance with laws and regulations governing safety, health, and infection control. But it only takes one lapse in protocol for an infection to take hold, and so we need your help to be vigilant at all times.

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### LOOK FOR LICENSES

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Nail care is one of seven license types regulated by the Board for Barbers and Cosmetology at DPOR. The other six are barbering, cosmetology, waxing, tattooing, body piercing, and esthetics.

**ONLY licensed nail technicians** and **cosmetologists** are allowed to perform nail care services for compensation, and they must be provided in a **licensed nail salon** or **cosmetology salon**.

- **Research the salon and the nail tech or cosmetologist.** Make sure licenses are current and check to see about any past disciplinary actions. Visit [www.dpor.virginia.gov/LicenseLookup](http://www.dpor.virginia.gov/LicenseLookup) or call (804) 367-8590.
- Offering nail care services for compensation without the required state license is a criminal offense subject to prosecution as a *Class 1 misdemeanor*.

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### DISINFECT OR DISPOSE?

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- **Check for general cleanliness.** Work areas should be clean, free of trash, and equipped with sanitary implements. Dirty towels must be stored in a labeled container and not used until properly laundered and sanitized. Clean towels need to be stored in a closed, clean cabinet.
- **Insist on clean, disinfected equipment.** Make sure multi-use tools (like metal nail clippers) come directly from a covered container, where they were *completely immersed for at least 10 minutes* in disinfectant solution that is not visibly cloudy or dirty. Tools that cannot be disinfected, such as cotton pads and emery boards, must be thrown out immediately after being used once—make sure if they are used on you that they are new and haven't been used before. If you have any doubt, don't be shy about asking the nail technician.
- *After washing their hands*, nail techs are required to do the following between each customer:
  - **Clean and disinfect** tools approved for re-use and made of hard, non-porous materials, such as metal scissors or plastic combs, *or*
  - **Dispose** of tools not approved for use on more than one person, such as orange sticks or emery boards.

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## PEDICURE POINTERS

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The warm, moist environment of a footbath after a pedicure is ripe for bacterial and fungal strains to collect and grow. The screens and tubes are particularly vulnerable—even if the basin itself is clean or uses a disposable liner—which is why it is critically important maintenance be performed in accordance with manufacturer recommendations.

If open sores or skin wounds are present—including microscopic shaving cuts, insect bites, scratches, scabbed-over wounds, or any condition that weakens the skin barrier—germs have a pathway into the body.

*People with diabetes are at particular risk of infection and should take extra precautions with foot treatments.*

DPOR advises you to **take a good look** before soaking your feet, and **be aware of these tips** to help you have a satisfying and safe pedicure:

- **Don't shave or wax your legs 24 hours or less before a pedicure.** Nicks, cuts, and abrasions may increase your risk of infection. According to study in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, people who shaved their legs with a razor prior to a pedicure were more than twice as likely to develop boils from mycobacteria.
- **Avoid treatments that might cause cutting or bleeding.** Don't let a nail technician scrape your feet before putting them into a footbath. While skilled and trained in caring for *nails*, licensed nail technicians are prohibited from performing any act that affects the structure or function of living tissue (which may constitute the practice of medicine).
- **Make sure the footbath is cleaned AND disinfected between every customer.** After each pedicure, the water must be drained and the footbath cleaned and disinfected in accordance with manufacturer specifications.
  - *Every* foot basin that holds water—whirlpool and non-whirlpool, air-jetted or pipe-less—should be **cleaned** with soap and water; then **disinfected** with an EPA-registered hospital-grade, tuberculocidal disinfectant; and finally **wiped dry** with a clean towel.
  - Keep in mind that **proper disinfection takes time** and is worth the wait!
  - Some new foot spas use disposable liners that are thrown away after each use, but still **watch out for dirty filters/screens** with circulating water foot spas.
- **DON'T BE SHY.** Ask questions about the salon's cleaning and disinfection procedures. Speak up if you see something wrong. And let us know about any salon, nail technician, or cosmetologist you think may be in violation of law or regulations.
  - Learn about how to file a complaint at <http://www.dpor.virginia.gov/File-Complaint/>.

