



IN VOGUE NAILS

Nail FAQ's/ 101

What is the difference between Acrylic and Gel Nails

With the variety of options available for nail services today, it can sometimes seem overwhelming, and the technical jargon can be very confusing. The information here applies to ALL professional nail services. It is intended to help you understand what you should expect from your nail services and what to be wary of. No particular nail product is better for your nail than another. All are safe to use if used as directed, so the real issue is to find a well educated nail professional that can recommend which enhancement option will meet your expectations and is best suited for your lifestyle.

Acrylic – A liquid and powder product that is carefully mixed to the correct ratio by the nail professional. A brush is dipped in liquid (monomer) then in powder (polymer) and the resulting “bead” is applied to the natural nail. Acrylic has a fairly strong odor during the application process but creates a strong and rigid enhancement. A quality salon will make every effort to minimize the odor and vapors from acrylic and other nail products. Acrylic is available in a wide variety in colour ranging from crystal clear and all through the colour spectrum to black, as well as glitters and shimmers. Colors can be custom mixed to compliment your skin tone, applied in artistic designs or to create the look of polished nails – without the chipping.

Gel - A gooey, jelly-like nail product (oligomer) which does not need to be mixed by the nail professional. It is applied to the natural nail and must be “cured” with an ultra-violet source (UV Lamp) where photo initiators cause the gel to harden. Gel is relatively new as an enhancement service but has been very popular in Europe and Canada for years. Like acrylic, gel is also available in a wide variety of colour. Gel is flexible but durable and is relatively odorless which makes it popular for use in spas or where odor may be a concern.

'My friend' told me that gel is “healthier” and “better for my nails” - is this true?


This is absolutely not true, but it has been a rampant rumor, even amongst nail professionals. Many product manufacturers will claim that their product is better for, or healthier for the nail but the truth of the matter is that none of them can legitimately make these claims and none will state it in writing. Any professional product manufactured for the nail industry is safe to use on the natural nail if it is used as directed by the manufacturer. The problem is that many nailists are not well-educated enough to see the discrepancies that makes these claims a myth. Many nailists are promoting gel in an effort to distinguish themselves from “discount” nail salons that commonly use MMA.

(see FAQ #5 for an explanation on MMA)

What is a French Manicure?

A French Manicure is either a nail polish application (or a nail enhancement of the client's choice) to give the illusion of a perfect white tip with a beautiful healthy – looking pink nail bed. This look is very versatile as you can dress it up or down, and makes your nails always looking clean. In the last few years it has been very popular to even change the colour of your tip to a different colour other than the traditional white tip look.

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Do artificial nail damage my natural nails?

Although your natural nail needs to be filed slightly for adequate product adhesion, it should only be enough to remove shine and must be done with care to protect the natural nail as much as possible. Professional quality products do not require that the nail be "roughed up" for product to adhere. A sensible nail professional understands that keeping your natural nail healthy is like having a strong foundation under a home – it's essential for good structure. Care must also be taken during your maintenance services to avoid overfilling the re-growth area. If your nails appear very pink in some areas and are sensitive, your nails have been over-filed.

Why do you charge more than those "other" salons?

Not all nailists are equal – just as not all hair stylists are equal. Many of us wouldn't dream of selecting our stylists based on price because we know it typically reflects their skill level and quality of work, not to mention the salon standards. Selecting your nail professional should be no different! A nail professional that uses only professional good quality products, has many years of experience, advanced training, enters competitions, or is renowned within their own industry/area will certainly charge more than one new to their career for example. Even the standards of cleanliness and professionalism of the salon itself warrants a higher price when you think about it. A high end salon or restaurant will charge more than your typical neighborhood salon or bistro. The best way to select a good nailist is to see their work first hand or in a portfolio.

Many of the "discount" salons you may see, depending on where you reside, use a low quality product called MMA (Methyl Methacrylate) because it is very cost effective. However, MMA has been proven to be damaging to nails and in fact, has been banned for use on nails for years, but because it is difficult to prove, many get away with it. This product frequently yellows, is typically cloudy, and is almost impossible to remove from the nail unless it is pried off. Typically, these salons restrict their nail services to time slots less than one hour and the quality of work and damage to your natural nails will reflect this. There are common complaints regarding the lack of professionalism such as taking a walk in client and making you wait well past your scheduled appointment, talking to other employees in another language in front of you and not talking to you, causing you pain and getting frustrated with you if you show it, over charging or charging additional fees for things that are typically included in your service, and not understanding English well enough to give you what you asked for.

How often do I need to go back and get my nails done/filled?

Typically, nails should be filled every 3 weeks. Some clients prefer to get it done every 2 weeks, others even every 4 weeks. It depends on the rate your nails grow, how well you take care of them, the length you wear them, and the length of your own natural nail plate. If you are new to nail enhancements, have short nail beds (pink area), are hard on your nails, or are wearing them about 1/3 the length of the nail bed or longer, you will likely need to stick to the 2 week schedule. If you have long nail beds, wear them shorter in length and take good care of them, or your nails grow slowly, and you are coming in for services without repairs, you can stretch your fills to 3 or 4 weeks.

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Why do I need to use cuticle oil?

Cuticle oil is vital to your natural nail health whether you wear nail enhancements or not. When the natural nail is too dry, it is more prone to chipping and cracking as well as becoming stained and misshaped. When the nail tip is dry it will often curl inward and pull away from nail enhancements providing a crevice that attracts bacteria and creates a risk for infection. The oil actually fills microscopic voids in the nail and nail enhancement structure which helps to provide more strength. Think of anything porous vs. solid and how easy they are to break in comparison.

How long can I continue having acrylic or gel nails?

You can have the nails as long as you feel comfortable with them. Your nails are a lot like your hair. You can continue to bleach your hair provided you are only bleaching the roots as they come in. So unless some problem arises you can have them as long as you want and as long as they remain healthy.

What if I break a nail?

Despite the amazing durability of nail enhancements, breaks still do happen. If I last did your nails and if you should break one of your nails, please let me fix it for you ! Nothing worse than walking around with a broken nail and letting it get caught up in just about everything, especially in sweaters and in hair ! Please give me a call, I will fit you in and I will fix it at no charge. I only charge nail repairs to walk-in clients whom I've never done a fill for, or to those who are clearly abusing their nail enhancements.

Will eating gelatin help strengthen weak nails?

No Dear... I can't even count how many times I've heard this one... Myth, Myth, Myth !!! While it's true that nails are made of a protein called Keratin and that gelatin too is a protein, there's never been any scientific proof that gelatin does anything to strengthen nails. By the same token, despite the fact that there are trace amounts of calcium in the nail, downing more milk or other calcium-rich products won't strengthen nails either. There is also a link to certain medications which can also affect your nails, some making them weaker, or dryer (causing chipping) and others making them stronger. Overall good nutrition, including adequate protein, is the way to go for strong nails.

Odor vs Odorless Acrylics

All traditional nail liquids have a distinctive odor. This odor comes from an important ingredient; ethyl methacrylate or EMA. EMA is the main ingredient in all traditional professional-only, branded nail liquids and it has a high evaporation rate, which causes vapors (and thus an odor). Additives to this ingredient, which alter working properties, are what make one brand of nail liquid different from another. Some nail liquids are odorless, but they do not contain EMA, and use other monomers in their formulations. These monomers are non-volatile and no, don't evaporate and thus don't cause an odor. Most salons in the world use traditional EMA liquids and that's why acrylic, in general, is associated with the odor of EMA.

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Odor vs Odorless Acrylics - continued

A big misconception in the salon industry is that the safety of a chemical is determined by the odor. People believe if something is odorless, it is safer. Nothing could be further from the truth. For example, people suffer or die from carbon monoxide inhalation, a gas which is out in our everyday environment, and which is completely odorless, colourless and tasteless...scary, isn't it? Odor is caused by vapors stimulating the nerves in our nose. The amount of vapor in the air is not determined by the odor, it is determined by the evaporation rate. Quickly evaporating liquids produce large amounts of vapors. Some odors in a salon are more offensive than others. Just because your brain does not like a smell does not mean it is harmful or "bad" for the technician or the client.



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