

Gel manicures can increase the risk of SKIN CANCER as well as wreck your nails

- **UV light from lamps used to set the gel manicures cause similar skin damage to sunbeds**
- **Treatment also causes nail to thin and hides infections**
- **Experts recommend to get nail treatment for special occasions and put on suncream beforehand**

By Claire Bates

They have been marketed as the most convenient way to have glossy, chip-free nails for weeks. But gel manicures could cause lasting damage to the nails and even increase the risk of skin cancer, dermatologists have warned.

A gel manicure uses three coats of a special type of polish from brands such as Shellac or OPI.

Each coat is set using UV light - and experts say this could have dangerous side-effects.



Hands are exposed to UV light when setting gel manicures, which increases the risk of skin cancer according to experts

Dr Chris Adigun, from New York University School of Medicine, said the UV lamps damage the skin cells in much the same way as sunbeds.

'Women who frequently get gel manicures should consider their skin cancer risk,' she said.



Women keen to beautify their hands should wear sunscreen before having a gel manicure

Writing in the American Academy of Dermatology, Dr Adigun is so concerned about the risk he advises women to slather sunscreen on their hands before having a gel manicure.

There is the added worry that the machines aren't regulated, meaning consumers don't know how much exposure they are getting to the rays.

It follows a study in 2009 that found two middle-aged women developed tumours on their hands following exposure to UV nail lights.

Neither had a family history of skin cancer and both worked indoors and had moderate exposure to sunlight, according to the research published in JAMA Dermatology.

Dr Adigun feels so strongly about the dangers that he says women should only gel nails for special occasions to 'decrease the consequences of chemical trauma'.

Another unwelcome side-effect of UV light exposure is skin aging, meaning you could end up with perfect-looking nails but wrinkly hands.

Furthermore, he says long-lasting manicures could hide any nail problems such as an infection or tumour, and this could delay diagnosis.

£20 TREATMENT HELPING NAIL BARS TO BOOM

Nail bars are one of the fastest-growing businesses on the high street, making up 16.5 per cent of new outlets in the past three years.

This is because manicures, priced at around £20, are considered to be a cheap way of transforming a look without having to invest in a new outfit.

They have also proved popular because they are quick, allowing women to feel pampered in just 15 minutes. Research reveals that nail salons have enjoyed a boom during the economic downturn as increasing numbers of women decided to treat themselves to a little affordable luxury.

The biggest chain in Britain, Nails Inc, which serves around 10,000 customers per week, had a turnover of £22million last year.

And, despite the recession, Britons spent more than £13billion on beautifying themselves in 2011, with trips to tanning shops, hairdressers, beauty salons and nail parlours up 50 per cent in the past decade. Nail polish sales rose 14 per cent to £179million in 2010, according to analysts Mintel.

'Any manicure left in place for an extended period of time is not a good idea because you are not seeing what is going on underneath the nail polish,' she said.

Frequent gel manicure users have long complained that their nails start to peel and break. Dr Adigun confirmed the process does cause nail thinning and brittleness. He referred to one study that found nail plates were measurably thinner after just one treatment.

But he added it was unclear whether brittleness is caused by chemicals in the gel polish or from the acetone used to remove it.

Acetone, which breaks down the chemical bonds of gel polish, is very drying and can also irritate the surrounding skin.

She said it can take nails up to six weeks to recover from a gel manicure. A spokesman from Creative Nail Designs (CND), the company behind Shellac, says that UV light exposure from a gel manicure lamp is no more dangerous than sitting under strip lighting. Dr David Valia, Director of Research and Development for CND, said: 'The amount of energy from a UV lamp during a nail service would be roughly equivalent to the amount of UV exposure one would experience during a typical day of exposure in indoor fluorescent lighting.'