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Gel Manicures Are Actually Pretty Safe—If You Follow This Advice

It's not all doom and gloom for gel mani addicts.

BY ADELE CHAPIN



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Gel manicures: they're practically impenetrable, which is a godsend if you're like us and always accidentally smudge a nail or two before you even leave the salon. But gel manis are so convenient, there has to be a catch, right? Can they seriously damage your nails?

The Lookbook caught up with two nail experts, and their take on gel manicures isn't all doom and gloom. First, the bad news: "The cons are, anything on your nail longer than seven days isn't good, because your nails need to breathe and gels weakens the nails," says celeb and editorial manicurist [Jackie Saulsbery](#).



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There's some science to back this up. [According to the American Academy of Dermatology](#), a patient in a study who underwent an ultrasound and reflectance confocal microscopy (RCM) measurements of her nail plate before and after one gel manicure showed thinning of her nail plate.

The American Academy of Dermatology suggests [taking breaks](#) between gel manicures to allow nails to regrow and repair. When you have your gel manicure on, Jackie has a way to help hydrate the nail and the skin around the nail: rub cuticle oil or cream into your cuticles daily.



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If you're a gel manicure addict, safe removal is the one of the biggest things you can do to keep your nails healthy. Chicago nail artist [Astrowifey](#) aka Ashley Crowe paints mind-blowing designs (look at these amazing [Gucci nails!](#)), and she's helped her customers overcome their fears about gel. "Often I have clients come in reluctant about gel manicures because they feel it has damaged their nails," she says. "After assessing the situation and consulting with the clients, I usually come to one of two conclusions; the clients admit to peeling off the gel manicure from their nails or a nail tech rushing and scraping off their gel with a metal implement like a cuticle pusher. This is aggressive to the nail and will peel part of the nail off with the gel."

In other words, don't try to DIY this and don't let anyone come at your nails with a blunt metal object. Jackie agrees. "Do not peel!" she says. "When you are peeling off

a gel manicure you are actually peeling off layers of your nail bed. This weakens your nails and makes them brittle and ridged.”



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Here’s how Jackie suggests you can take off gel nail polish: “Ask your nail tech to do the following: Put some cuticle oil and acetone on a cotton balls and wrap with foil, let it sit for 5 to 10 minutes. Move in circular motion and the polish will come right off. The oil mixture is great for hydration and won’t tear up the skin or nail.”

Ashley has another gentle removal method for nail techs: “Manicures should be soaked using acetone and not rushed. You can use a something soft like an orange wood stick to flake off the dissolved gel from the nail but never a metal tool and never scrape. Heat helps speed up the removal process, and sometimes wrapping

the hands in a warmed towel can help with time constraints.”

Like most things in life, it turns out patience is a virtue. Meanwhile, if you're worried about chemicals in gel nail polish, there's a newish [Bio Seaweed Gel polish](#) that's free of things like formaldehyde, toluene, DBP, BHA, and solvents. For those who are ultra-cautious about UV exposure from gel manicures, Miami dermatologist Dr. Jackie Dosal [writes](#) that instead of SPF 30 on your hands, you could try wearing these [YouVeeShield](#) or [BloxSun](#) gloves during the sealing process. The more you know, right? Even when it comes to life's little luxuries, like pretty nails.

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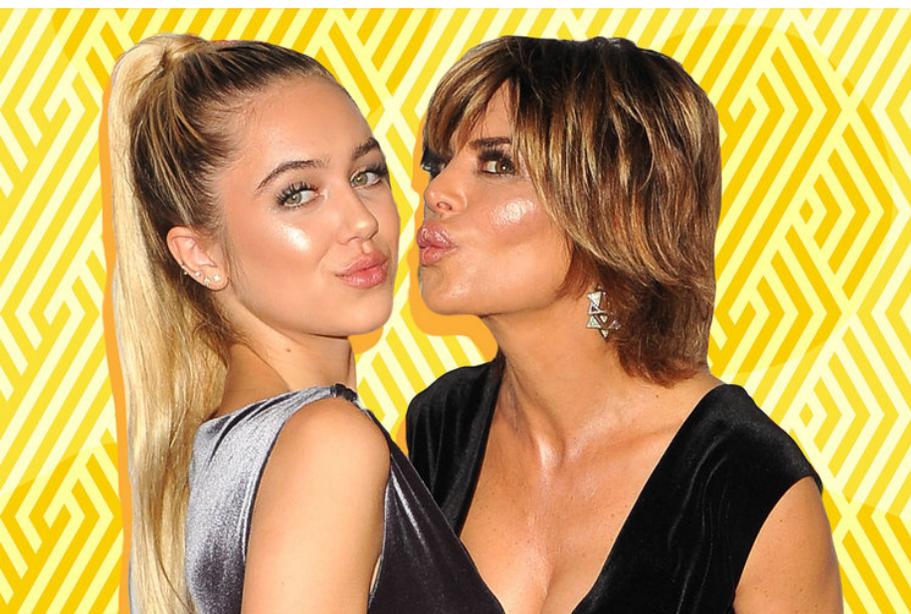
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