

COVID-19 Transitioning – Standards and Guidance for Nail Technicians and Nail Artists

The following standards are issued under the Public Health Act Chapter 465 of the Laws of Malta and require strict adherence.

Employers and workers must work together to adapt and promote safe work practices consistent with advice from public health authorities and to ensure that premises are ready for the social distancing and correct hygiene measures that are critical to the success of the transition.

Employers and workers must prevent the transmission of COVID-19 while at work, consistent with updated advice from the public health authorities.

Employers and workers must prepare for the possibility that there will be cases of COVID-19 in the workplace and be ready to respond immediately, appropriately, effectively and efficiently, and consistent with specific recommendations from public health authorities.

Standards to be observed by Nail Technicians and Nail Artists

- Ensure that maximum capacity of clients and staff inside the salon at any one time is one person per 4 square metres, including staff (Allow only one (1) client and one (1) member of staff at any one time inside a shop/salon with a total area less than 8 square metres).
- Acrylic or tempered glass barriers are to be fitted in reception areas (2 metres from the floor).
- Workstations/chairs must be kept at a minimum distance of 2 metres from each other unless separated by an acrylic or tempered glass barrier (2 metres high). These barriers must be cleaned properly after every client (see section entitled 'Salon environment').
- A double acrylic or tempered glass barrier between client and service provider needs to be installed.
- Hand sanitizers must be made available at the reception area and near all workstations for employee and client use.
- Clients (and suppliers) must wear a mask (covering mouth, nose and chin) or visor at all times unless instructed otherwise by the service provider due to the treatment process.
- Staff should wear a surgical or cotton mask or visor when providing a service to a client.
- Service providers should wash their hands before every treatment and regularly change their gloves, including between clients.
- Clients receiving hand treatments should wash their hands and use a clean/disinfected brush with soap and warm water to clean beneath the nails for 20 seconds before the treatment starts.
- Enough time should be allowed for the workstation / environment to be cleaned between clients. Clients should not be allowed in the salon before the service of the previous client is completed and the salon is sanitised.
- Any tools and/or equipment used during the service of a client must be washed and sterilised after each client.
- Single-use files, buffers and non-metal tools should be used and disposed of safely.
- Steam treatments/vapour generating techniques and high-speed tools should not be used.

- A record should be kept of the names, contact details and date of treatment/appointment for all clients in order to facilitate contact tracing should this be required.
- Non-essential high touch items such as magazines should be removed.

Understanding how COVID-19 spreads & the implication to aesthetic Industry.

Current research suggests that the SARSCoV-2 virus (the virus that causes COVID-19) is transmitted from person to person:

- Through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes or talks loudly.
- Between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 2 metres).

There is also a possibility that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the COVID-19 virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, and eyes.

Most persons infected with COVID-19 experience mild symptoms and recover. However, some people develop more serious complications and may require hospital care. Risk of serious illness increases with age, for people with weakened immune systems and people with conditions such as diabetes, heart and lung disease.

Shop/Salon administration

Salon/shop owners /Management should

- Exercise the right of refusal of entry into the shop/salon of clients if they are visibly unwell or have respiratory symptoms including coughing, fever, shortness of breath, runny nose or sore throat.
- Ensure that maximum capacity of clients and staff inside the salon at any one time is one person per four (4) square metres. To achieve this 4 square metre 'rule';
 - calculate the area of the shop/salon (e.g. length of shop/salon in metres x width of shop/salon in metres = area of shop/salon in square metres),
 - divide the area of the shop/salon by 4, and
 - the answer of that division (ignoring any remainder) is the maximum capacity that the shop/salon can hold at any one time.
 - By way of example, if a shop/salon is 25 square metres in size, $25 \div 4 = 6.25$, ignoring 0.5, the shop/salon should allow only six (6) persons at any time inside the shop/salon, including staff.
- Allow only one (1) client and one (1) member of staff at any one time inside a shop/salon with a total area less than 8 square metres.
- Ensure that clients should be kept at the same workstation as much as possible.
- Encourage clients to book an appointment online or by phone; appointments should be spaced to avoid clients coming into contact with each other; walk-ins should not be allowed; a sign to this effect should be put up outside the shop/salon.
- Allow enough time for cleaning the workstation / environment between clients. Clients should not be allowed in the salon before the service of the previous client is completed and the salon is sanitised.
- Ensure that the salon is thoroughly cleaned with a disinfectant between clients. This includes workstations, chairs, trolleys, wash hand basins. Door handles and any other surfaces should be cleaned regularly.
- Ensure that any sets of tools and/or equipment used during the service of a client is washed and sterilised after each client.
- Not allow clients to wait inside the shop/salon and advise them to arrive just before their appointment and leave immediately thereafter.

- Ensure that clients attend for the appointment on their own. Children should not be allowed in. Exceptions can be made when the clients have special needs and must be accompanied by a caregiver.
- Schedule courier and deliveries outside client times.
- Place floor stickers and signage that provide guidance for social distancing.
- Keep a record of the names, contact details and date of treatment/appointment for all clients in order to facilitate contact tracing should this be required.
- Remove non-essential high touch items such as magazines.
- Not provide beverages and refreshments for clients. Clients should be advised to bring their own refreshment preferably water.
- Ask customers to avoid unnecessary handling of retail products
- Encourage contactless payment as much as possible.
- Ensure that employees who are sick MUST stay home.
- Provide training and educational materials on sanitation, handwashing, cough and sneeze etiquette, use of face masks, visors, gloves and aprons, and other protective behaviours to prevent the spread of COVID19.
- Ensure staff rooms are thoroughly cleaned and sanitized and not allow staff to congregate.
- Ensure that all wash hand basins in the workplace have antibacterial soap and paper towels available. No air flow driers or revolving cloth towels are allowed.
- Place handwashing signs in the restrooms.
- Provide alcohol wipes near the phone and payment stations.
- Consider flexible work schedules/hours to reduce the number of people (employees and clients) in salons/shops at all times in order to maintain social distancing.

Communication with clients

- Clients should be contacted before their appointment asking whether they have had any respiratory symptoms for the last 7 days or if they are in mandatory quarantine.
- Telephone or virtual consultations should be conducted prior to appointment where possible in order to limit contact time in the shop/salon.
- Ensure that clients are aware of what is expected of them as part of the hygiene and infection control measures being practiced at the shop/salon BEFORE entering the shop/salon. These can be communicated to clients over the phone, via email or other appropriate virtual channels.
- Information about services, prices, aftercare and follow up appointments should be given electronically, over the phone or through virtual consultations to avoid handing out leaflets/papers/appointment cards etc.

Maintaining good hygiene practices

Staff should

- Avoid touching their eyes nose and mouth.
- Wash hands frequently especially:
 - Before, during (if required), and after each treatment/service to a client
 - Before putting on and after removing face masks, visors, gloves and aprons
 - Before and after cleaning tools, equipment and the environment in the salon
 - After using the rest room
 - Upon arriving at work and at home

Washing hands with soap should be given priority over using alcohol hand rub. The application of alcohol hand rub should not be done in place of hand washing but rather as a complementary step AFTER handwashing or if hand washing is not convenient. Alcohol hand rub should contain a minimum of 70% alcohol.

- Use disposable hand towels to dry hands and to open and turn off taps.
- Not use handshakes/hugs when greeting clients and colleagues.
- Monitor their personal health and condition for any symptoms, however mild.
- Wear uniforms at work which should be changed daily and washed after use. Uniforms/clothing worn at the salon should not be worn at home.
- Keep towels in a cupboard or closed container. Used towels should be placed in an appropriate recipient (plastic bag or equivalent) to be taken directly for laundry.
- Keep nails short and do not apply acrylics.
- Keep hair tied back to avoid unnecessary touching of hair and face.
- Practice good respiratory etiquette requiring everyone at the shop/salon to, at all times:
 - cover their coughs and sneezes with a clean tissue or use their elbow (and no spitting)
 - avoid touching their face, eyes, nose and mouth
 - dispose of used tissues and cigarette butts hygienically, e.g. in closed bins
 - wash their hands before and after smoking a cigarette
 - clean and disinfect shared equipment and machinery after use
 - wash body, hair (including facial hair) and clothes thoroughly every day
 - have no intentional physical contact such as shaking hands and patting backs
- Staff who develop a mild cough, fever (i.e. a temperature of 37.2⁰C or higher), shortness of breath, headaches, tiredness, loss of taste, loss of smell or diarrhoea, should call the public health helpline on 111 giving details of their symptoms.

Use of Personal Protective Equipment by staff

- Staff should wear a surgical or cotton mask and visor when providing a service to a client.
- The face mask should completely cover the face from the bridge of the nose down to the chin. Clean hands with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitiser before putting on and taking off the face mask. When taking off the face mask, remove it from behind, avoiding touching the front side. Dispose of the face mask safely by placing it in a plastic bag and put it in the trash if it is disposable. Wash your hands or apply 70% alcohol hand-rub immediately after removing the face mask. Washable, reusable face should be washed as soon as possible after each use, using common detergent at 60 °C. Surgical masks are not intended to be used more than once. If your mask is damaged or soiled, or if breathing through the mask becomes difficult, you should remove the face mask, discard it safely, and replace it with a new one.
- Visors should ideally be the reusable type and are disinfected appropriately in between clients.
- Gloves should be worn only to provide treatments/services that necessitated the use of gloves even prior to the COVID-19 pandemic for hygiene purposes or to prevent transmission of other infectious agents such as HIV and Hepatitis. Gloves should be changed and disposed of safely after every client.
- A disposable apron/gown should be worn and changed after every client.



Wash your hands
with soap and water or
sanitizer before touching
the mask



Inspect the mask
for tears or holes



Find the top side
where the metal piece
or stiff edge is



Hold the mask from the
elastic loops and place it
on your face. Ensure the
coloured-side faces
outwards



Avoid touching the
front side of the mask
while putting it on
your face



Place the metal piece
or stiff edge over
your nose



Cover your mouth,
nose and chin. Do not
leave gaps on the side



Remove the mask from
behind the ears or from
the elastic loops



Keep the used mask
away from you and
surfaces once it is
removed



Dispose of the mask
immediately after use
in a safe way



Wash your hands
either with soap and
water or sanitizer after
discarding the mask

Used PPE should be disposed of safely in the mixed waste stream (black bag), in double bags.

Clients (and suppliers)

- Should have their temperature checked using a contactless forehead thermometer before entering the shop/salon.
- Should apply alcohol hand rub upon entering the shop/salon. An appropriate 70% alcohol hand-rub should be provided at the entrance of the shop/salon.
- Must wear a mask (covering mouth and nose and chin) at all times.
- Should limit the personal belongings they bring with them ideally to just a mobile phone and mode of payment.

The Shop/Salon Environment

- Doors and windows must be kept open, air-conditioning adjusted for more ventilation and recirculated air-conditioning avoided.
- Airconditioning flaps should be directed towards the ceiling. Filters should be cleaned well and maintained properly. Salon managers/staff are advised to refer to guidance regarding air-conditioning and ventilation systems that is available at https://deputyprimeminister.gov.mt/en/health-promotion/covid-19/Documents/mitigation-conditions-and-guidances/Guidance_Air-conditioning-and-ventilation-systems_23Jun20.pdf
- Extractors are recommended in every salon. These must be thoroughly cleaned every week.
- All precautions must be taken to ensure water systems are safe to prevent the risk of infections derived from water such as Legionnaire's disease. If the water supply is connected to the main water supply, flushing of the water system by opening all taps for a few minutes should suffice. However, if the supply of water is through a roof tank, this should be cleaned, and the water system is flushed through for a few minutes. It is important that the water heater temperature is raised to 60°C and thus there is no need to take samples and get approval from the Environmental Health Directorate. If the shop forms part of a complex or a hotel and the water supply is through the complex or hotel main water system, please follow the procedure indicated in Annex 1.
- The use of disposable towels is encouraged. If non-disposable towels are used, these must be changed after every client and washed at a temperature of at least 60 degrees Celsius.
- Clean towels must be stored in a closed container/cabinet.
- Do not forget to also clean the cords of electrical appliances.
- Ensure that all products such as lotions, creams, wax, etc. are stored in a closed container and if not, these should be discarded and replaced

Cleaning shop/salon surfaces is crucial to prevent and reduce the spread of viruses and other germs.

- Wear disposable gloves while cleaning and disinfecting the environment.
- Where feasible use disposable cloths or when using non-disposable cloths, they must be changed after every use and washed at a temperature of at least 60 degrees Celsius.
- Wipe down **all surfaces** (floors, worktops, trolleys, couches, styling chairs, sinks/basins etc) with medical grade disinfectant & cleaner following guidelines and let them air dry. Contact time on label must be observed for disinfectant to work. Contact time refers to how long the disinfectant is visibly wet on the surface allowing it to thoroughly destroy all the pathogens. Typical contact time for immersion/sprays is 10 minutes, for disinfectant wipes is 2-4 minutes.
- Remember to clean **all touch points** with medical grade disinfectant & cleaner frequently during the day. These include door push plates/handles, light switches, fridge handles, touch points on any shelving, soap dispenser, toilet flush and taps, card machine.
- Cleaning of the workstation and any other surfaces/touch points described in the points above should be **repeated after use with every client**.
- Acrylic or tempered glass barriers should isolate workstations from each other, and they must also be wiped clean after every client.
- Items on hard surfaces should be kept to a minimum.
- Where possible avoid using any materials or furniture in the shop/salon that are difficult to clean such as carpets, material couches, etc.

Supplies, tools and equipment

- The use of disposable towels is encouraged. If non-disposable towels/linens are used, these must be changed after every client and washed at a temperature of at least 60 degrees Celsius.
- Clean linens/towels must be stored in a closed container/cabinet.
- Baskets/bins used to hold soiled towels/linens must be cleaned and disinfected daily. Use a basket/bin that can be kept closed or used with liners which can be removed and discarded.
- Use disposable single use tools and supplies as much as possible to help reduce the risk of cross contamination.
- All tools that can be cleaned and reused must be sterilised / disinfected (strictly following manufacturer's instructions) using products that are tested to approved standards.
- Clean tools should be kept in a clean environment and properly covered until use.
- All used tools need to be stored in a specially marked closed container until cleansing and disinfection
- All equipment utilised during a treatment/service should be cleaned and disinfected after each use. This should be done in line with manufacturer's guidelines and one should consult with the providers of the equipment to verify what proper cleaning and disinfecting methods should be used.
- Tools (non-metal) - Nail technicians are to use single-use files, buffers etc. and dispose of these safely.
- Brushes are to be cleaned after every client and stored in closed boxes. Brush handles are to be cleaned between clients and the outside of all containers are always to be kept clean.
- Pedicure Bowls must be disassembled and disinfected after every client.
- Ensure that all products such as lotions, creams, scrubs etc. are stored in a closed container and if not, these should be discarded and replaced.
- Steam treatments/vapour generating techniques should not be used.

Special considerations

A. Hand Cleanliness & Hand Treatments

Nail technicians are to:

- Wash hands between every client treatment
- Wear gloves which are to be changed frequently
- Have a good supply of brushes and a 'contaminated box' for used ones
- Disinfect the brushes and container/box every day.

Whilst clients should:

- Wash hands with liquid soap and warm water upon entry
- Dry using a disposable hand towel
- Not touch face or any personal belongings
- Use clean/disinfected brush with soap and warm water to clean beneath the nails, wash for 20 seconds
- Dry with a disposable hand towel.

B. Foot Treatments

Nail technicians are to:

- Not touch feet until they have been soaked in the bowl
- Dispose of paper towels and pedi-slippers, safely, after each treatment.

Whilst clients should:

- Remove shoes, socks, tights, etc. upon entry and place on a paper towel
- Use pedi-slippers, then wash hands and dry with a disposable hand towel.

C. Dust

- Nail technicians are to have a double acrylic screen allowing a workspace between the two. These should be cleaned frequently, strictly following manufacturer instructions.
- When it comes to natural nail treatments: technicians are to keep nail filing dust to a minimum by disposing of paper desk towels after treatment. High speed tools are not allowed.
- In all cases, windows and doors should be opened to maintain adequate air circulation.

How to stay informed: www.covid19health.gov.mt

Annex 1

The following are the legal requirements to be carried out on the water systems prior re-opening of the premises:

1. Carry out a full system disinfection of the cold-water system, flushing through to all outlets to achieve 50 mg/l free chlorine for at least an hour checking that this level is achieved at the furthest outlets. This may be also achieved by making uses e.g. 5 mg/l for 10 hours (this all depends on the water piping system condition). It is important to top up when required throughout this process;
2. Flush out and refill the system to achieve maximum normal operating target levels of disinfection (equivalent to at least 0.2 mg/l free chlorine);
3. Refill and carry out a thermal shock by raising the temperature of the whole of the contents of the hot water storage heater from 70°C to 80°C then circulating this water throughout the system for up to three days. To be effective, the capacity and temperature of the hot water storage heater should be sufficient to ensure that the temperatures at the taps and appliances do not fall below 65°C. Each tap and appliance should be run sequentially for at least five minutes at the full temperature, taking appropriate precautions to minimise the risk of scalding;
4. Monitor temperatures and biocide levels where applicable, adjust where necessary, for at least 48-72 hours and then take *Legionella* samples from sentinel outlets (microbiological samples taken before 48 hours following disinfection may give false negative results);
5. Ensure you keep all documentation for inspection by the Competent Authority, including the review and update of the risk assessment manual including monitoring data, etc., with evidence of who carried out the monitoring, add time, date and signature;
6. Laboratory results for *Legionella* analysis which have to be carried out at an accredited laboratory, together with all the necessary documentation referred to in point 5 above and a declaration from the private water consultant under whom this water system treatment has been carried out are to be sent to the Water Regulatory and Auditing Unit within the Environmental Health Directorate prior reopening of the establishment;
7. Once it is found that your systems of the hot and cold water are under control then the establishment can reopen.