

# Nail Changes

Edmonton's Cosmetic Surgery Clinic

## Nail Changes &dash; Causes and Cures

Nail changes are very common and bothersome to many people. I hear concerns from my patients almost every day. They are getting older and, as most of their friends, they notice that the nails are changing. They generally don't mind the changes on the toenails, they are less visible, but they do not like the changes in the fingernails. The nails are getting rougher, more brittle and develop lines. Some of the changes are related to getting older but some of them relate to just plain daily living or even some general body conditions.

The health and appearance of nails are related to many factors. Amongst the most important ones are:

- Your general health &dash; When we are malnourished in general or in specific ingredients such as minerals and vitamins, our skin and nails will reflect that. This is not very common in our society but it maybe present in people that are strict with specific and ill-conceived diet. In addition, patients that suffer from thyroid conditions or other general body conditions such as diabetes, auto-immune diseases, chronic infections or inflammations will show significant changes in their nail.
- Exposures to environmental factors &dash; Our skin and nails can take lots of abuse from all kinds of environmental factors but after a while this abuse will definitely show in the way our nails look. Too much harsh or even everyday chemicals such as water, soap or dishwashing fluids can and will change the way your nails look making them brittle and uneven looking.
- Specific nail conditions &dash; We all know that nail fungal infection can dramatically change the way our nails look. In addition, other skin conditions such as eczema, psoriasis, warts and many different inflammatory conditions can change the look of our nails. In these cases, it is critical that dermatologist be involved for proper diagnosis and treatment.

Is there anything that can be done to improve the appearance and health of the nails? The answer is YES and here are some of the most practical ways to make sure your nails are and look as healthy as possible:

- Do not use your nails as tools &dash; It is too frequent that I see patients using nails to open cans of pop. This not only looks bad but it also fragments the nail plate leading to bigger breaks later.
- Protect you hands and nails - Wear rubber gloves when washing dishes or other household items. We all know that detergents and soaps can be harsh to our skin and nails.
- Moisturize - Apply a hand cream to nails and cuticle after each washing as even water makes nails very dry, leading them to be brittle and peeling.
- Avoid cutting or clipping your nails &dash; Try using an emery board and file at a 45-degree angle from under the free edge of the nail.
- Protect the nail surface - Nail polish acts as a protector to the natural nail. Don't peel off nail polish, as you will also remove the top layer of your nail leading to damage.
- Do not bite nails - Break the habit of nail biting, which can damage the nail and the cuticle, leading to a deformed shape, uneven growth or infection.
- Let yourself be pampered &dash; Once in a while let professionals take care of your nails. It feels good when others are looking after ourselves but make sure that the cuticle is treated with extreme care. I recommend that only minimal amounts of cuticle are removed and shaped. Only loose and detached parts of cuticle can be trimmed and I would avoid

pushing cuticle back as this exposes fresh parts of the nail plate preventing it from being nourished.

Great looking nails are just a few weeks or months away. It takes that long for the nail to grow and once we stop nail abuse and start these basic protective steps, we are sure to enjoy radiant nails once more. When these simple and common sense methods fail, we may need more detailed assessment and perhaps specific treatments from Dermatologists, the skin experts.

Youthful Image