

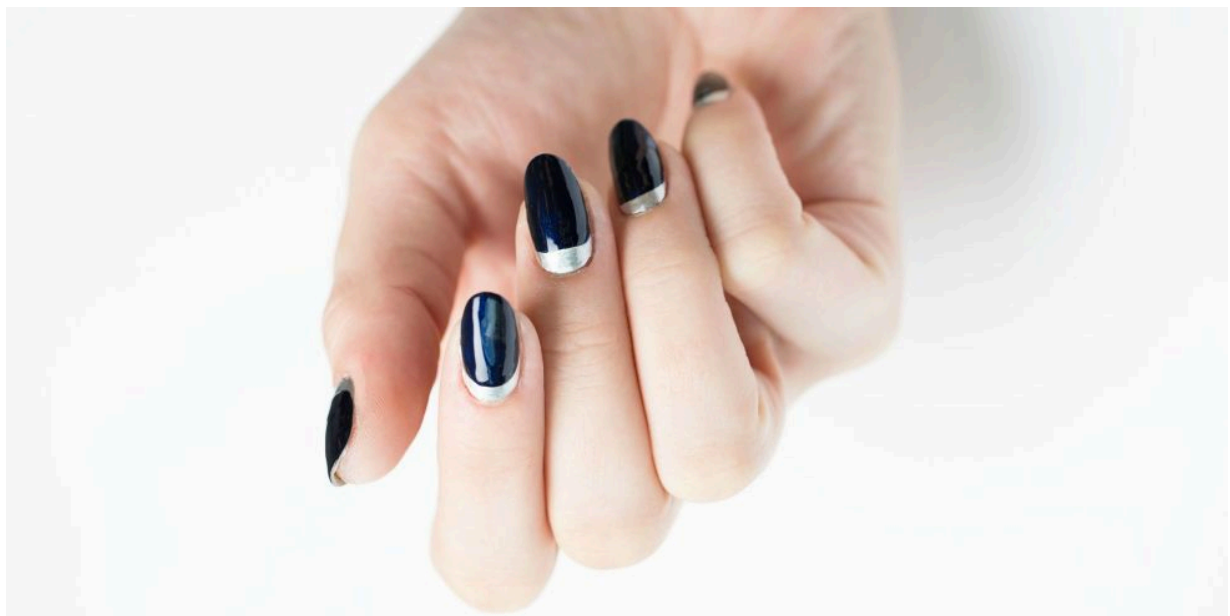


15 Daily Habits of Women With Amazing Nails

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1. She keeps her hands very clean.

Before you do anything, it's important to make sure your nails and the skin around them are thoroughly dirt-free. Then remove all traces of your last color with an acetone-free remover (anything else unnecessarily dries out your nail). Dr. Ava Shamban, author of *Heal Your Skin*, recommends applying

soap to a toothbrush, then gently scrubbing your nails and skin. This will remove dirt and exfoliate any dead skin without the need for harsh, drying chemicals or expensive scrubs.

2. She's always gentle.

Your nails are delicate, and scrubbing them too roughly can actually expose you to infection. Another no-no: Using metal nail tools under the nail, as too much digging under the nail plate will cause it to separate from the skin, leading to an irregular white arching nail tip explains N.Y.C. dermatologist Dr. Janet Prystowsky.

3. She trims regularly.

Regular trims are as important to your nails as they are to your hair, says Dr. Prystowsky. So set aside time to clip them every two weeks, adjusting to more or less often once you see how your nails respond.

4. She values health over length.

Long nails are beautiful, but if you're someone who has struggled with snags or breakage, Dr. Shamban recommends that you keep your nails short — at least to start out with. A shorter style with a rounded edge tends to be easier to manage and looks neater, so you can focus on building strength without worrying about anything else. As long as each nail is uniform in shape and matches its nine neighbors, you won't miss the added length.

5. She always has an emery board on hand.

If you're someone whose work or gym routine causes a lot of wear and tear, Dr. Prystowsky suggests keeping a nail file handy to smooth away any rough edges that happen on the spot. The best way to do it? Work in one direction with the grain of your nail for a smoother finish.

6. She doesn't cut her cuticles.

The cuticle has a very important purpose to serve: It seals the area at the base of the nail. So when you cut or remove the cuticle, it breaks that seal of protection, leaving you vulnerable to bacteria and the possibility of infection. The better you are at leaving cuticles alone, the more your nails will thank

you. But if you're dead set on messing with them, Dr. Debbie Palmer, dermatologist and creator of Replere, recommends gently pushing back the cuticle once a week with a wooden orange stick after getting out of the shower, then massaging them with a cuticle cream or thick, creamy lotion.

7. She takes care of her tools.

Disinfecting your nail tools between uses is just as important as regularly cleaning your makeup brushes, and for the same reason — bacteria. To keep your nails happy and infection-free, Dr. Prystowski advises washing metal tools with soap and water and then wiping with rubbing alcohol. And don't forget to regularly replace disposable tools like emery boards. There's no reason to continue using a tattered tool when it's so easy to rotate in a new one.



8. She never forgets to use base coat.

Painting your nails at home is no excuse to cut corners by skipping the base coat. Dr. Prystowsky points out that this step not only protects the nail from

being stained by the polish, but also helps the color look more saturated and opaque with just one coat. And if you really want to take things to the next level, Dr. Shamban suggests adding a coat of clear gloss between each layer to add extra shine and protection.

9. She reads the labels.

Just as with makeup and skincare, not all nail polish brands are created equal, so make sure you're buying or using a good product. Dr. Debbie Palmer urges you to steer clear of polishes containing toxic chemicals like dibutyl phthalate, formaldehyde, and toluene, as these toxins can contribute to brittleness, splitting, and cracking.

10. She seals the deal with a top coat.

Don't think you're squirming your way out of using top coat, either. This step is just as important, as the top coat seals in the polish's color and adds a much-needed gloss finish to your digits. Dr. Prystowsky recommends adding another top coat layer every three days to decrease chipping, so you'll get the most out of your manicure. Seriously, what's the point of spending all that time painting your nails if it only lasts a day?

11. She indulges in acrylic or gel treatments sparingly.

Any nail expert you talk to is going to do their best to steer you away from acrylic or gel manicures — as long-lasting and convenient as they are because they're very hard on the nail. But if you're dead set on getting them, there are some ways to minimize the damage to your hands and nails. The main issue with a gel manicure is the exposure to UV light in the drying device, which can damage the skin below and around the nail, leading to an increased risk of cancer. To help reduce that risk, Dr. Prystowky recommends applying a sunscreen with an SPF of 30 to 50 before the procedure to help block the damage. Or you can try special gloves that expose only the nails themselves, shielding the rest of your hands from the harmful UV rays.



12. She gives her nails a break.

Save the elaborate nail art and those bold colors with lots of pigment for the weekend, and during the rest of the week, give your nails time to rest and repair with a clear gloss. Dr. Shamban warns that going from one strong polish color to another without giving your nails a break can dry them out, turn them yellow, and over time, even weaken the structure of the nail.

13. She always moisturizes.

You wouldn't go to sleep without moisturizing your face, so why should your nails be any different? Nail artist and expert Holly Falcone likes to use a mix of almond and avocado oils to keep cuticles and nails hydrated while she gets some shut-eye, but any nutrient-rich oil or moisturizer will do. In a pinch, you can even use a dab of lip balm.

14. She uses protection.

Gloves, ladies, gloves — get your mind out of the gutter! Whenever you're cleaning with harsh chemicals, gardening, or doing anything that involves

soaking or dirtying your hands, Dr. Prystowsky insists that wear rubber, vinyl, nitrile or plastic gloves, preferably with a cotton liner. Cleaning dishes in hot, soapy water sans gloves can weaken the nails, while getting them caked with dirt from gardening will require a level of cleaning that you want to avoid wherever possible. Similarly, now that the weather is getting chilly, remember to wear a pair of mittens or gloves so that the cold air and wind don't undo the hard work you did moisturizing, leaving you with dry, flaky, scaly skin.

15. She considers her diet.

Your fingernails are made of a protein called keratin, so just as with the clarity of your skin or the shine of your hair, you can improve your nails by tweaking your diet. Falcone advises adding vitamins and supplements like biotin, Vitamin E, and fish oil to your daily regimen, while Dr. Palmer recommends protein-rich foods like beans, fish, and nuts. The one thing every expert agrees on: Once you hit on the combination that works for you, you'll be rewarded with stronger, clearer nails.