



How to build strong, healthy nails

Taking proper care of your nails is more than a matter of looks. Clear, strong nails are a marker of good physical health. They reflect everything from your level of stress to the quality of your diet.

It may seem like a simple thing, but caring for your nails is an essential part of a comprehensive self-care routine. Healthy nails don't happen by chance. Here is what you need to know to keep your nails in excellent condition.



KEEP NAILS TRIMMED AND SHAPED

Don't wait for nails to break or become jagged before giving them a good trim. Fingernails, in particular, need frequent grooming to maintain a healthy shape.

For best health, cut nails straight across. Then, use an emery board to give them a rounded shape at the tips. This will prevent breakage and minimize the risk of ingrown nails.

The nails on your fingers grow three times faster than the nails on your toes. Plan to trim and shape them more often than your toenails.



CARE FOR YOUR CUTICLES

The cuticle seals the skin of your finger around the nail. Never trim or move the cuticles as this disrupts the seal and increases your risk of a nail infection. If you go for a manicure, let the technician know to leave the cuticles alone.

Cuticles benefit from extra moisture, especially in the winter months. You can use a special cuticle moisturizer. Or, even simple hand lotion massaged into the nail area will improve cuticle health.



LIMIT MANICURES AND PEDICURES

Harsh nail products and regular use of polish weaken your nails. Wearing artificial nails can make your nails thin and brittle, as well as increase the risk of infection.

Enjoy manicures and pedicures on occasion, but make sure to give your nails a break in between. Letting your nails enjoy time without polish or products will keep them healthy and less prone to breakage.

If you really love artificial nails, save them for special occasions and opt for a simple french manicure whenever possible.



DON'T FORGET YOUR TOENAILS

Because toenails do not grow as fast, they often don't get as much care and attention. But don't fall into the habit of ignoring them.

Inspect toenails regularly and watch for sharp edges or ingrown nails. Also, keep a close eye out for changes in nail color which could signal a nail problem or even an infection.

Wear comfortable shoes that don't pinch the toes and use flip-flops at public showers or pools. These steps will keep the toenails clean and healthy.