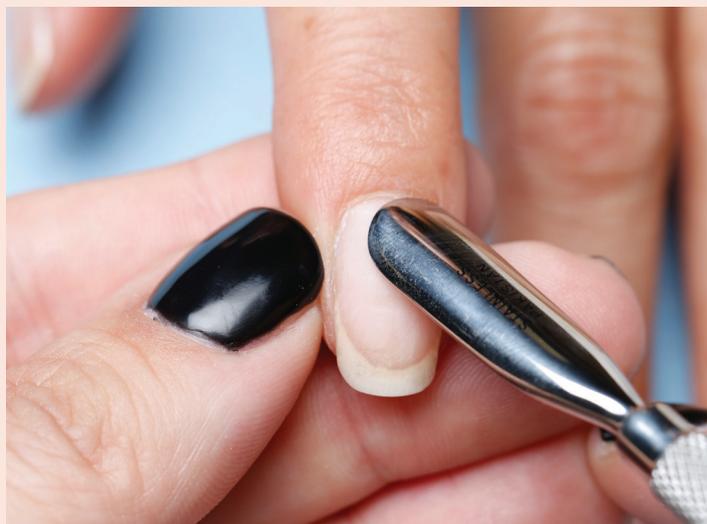


How to Talk to a Client About Cuticles

When a client's hands are in desperate need of maintenance, one of the easiest ways to see improvement is to clean up the cuticles. But how much should a tech "clean up?" And how do you reassure your client your actions are safe? As a nail tech, it's your job to know so you can talk about the dangers and still the rumors that surround the subject. That conversation may go something like this:



Client: I read an article that said we shouldn't cut our cuticles or let our manicurist cut them either. So, could you please make sure you don't cut them today?

You: I will absolutely be careful to avoid cutting your cuticles! Proper cuticle care is very important. But, let's talk about what that means. Often, when people say "cuticle," they mean this thick layer of skin that surrounds the base of nail. But that's actually called the eponychium. The "cuticle" is this thin, transparent layer of skin visible on top of the nail plate. That has to be cleaned off, or the nail polish — or enhancements — won't adhere.

Client: But the article said if you remove that, I could get an infection.

You: Let me show you what they mean. This eponychium attaches itself to the nail plate with a thin, delicate wing of skin. Where it attaches, it forms a protective seal. That seal should not be broken — ever. When it is, there is a risk of infection. But as the nail plate grows out, that delicate layer of skin remains on the nail plate and becomes visible to us. That's the transparent layer I just showed you.

The eponychium continues to generate new skin cells that continue to build that protective seal. But the old skin cells that are growing out with the nail are still clinging to

the nail plate. We can remove the dead skin on the top of the nail without ever touching that connected, protective seal under the eponychium. We can also safely trim any of the dry, frayed skin around the eponychium that is likely to catch or rip. What we don't want to do is break the skin or the protective seal.

Client: Well, how do you avoid it?

You: It's important to understand nail anatomy and to use products that protect clients and help nail techs. I use this cream that both softens the skin and breaks up the keratin in the skin cells that are on top of the nail plate. After it has a chance to work, it's just a matter of cleaning the nail. I'm not "cutting the cuticle." I'm removing debris from the nail plate. I never push the eponychium back, because that could break the protective seal. And I never cut off the healthy skin of the eponychium.

Client: So, really, the article should have warned readers about breaking the seal, and about removing the healthy skin of the — let me use my new word! — eponychium.

You: Exactly. Breaking the skin or that seal could cause infection if dirt and bacteria get in there. But, as a trained nail tech, I'm equipped to safely and effectively care for your nails and skin. Don't worry. You're in good hands.