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To all Nail Salons

Protecting Employees' and Customers' Health from Chemicals in Nail Salons

This circular provides guidance to nail salons on measures that can protect employees' and customers' health by minimising exposure to harmful chemicals.

2 Nail care products such as nail polishes, fingernail glues, and nail polish removers contain chemicals, some of which can be harmful to the health of nail salon employees and customers¹. These products are regulated as cosmetic products under the Health Products Act and must meet safety requirements specified in Act, as well as the Health Products (Cosmetic Products – ASEAN Cosmetic Directive) Regulations. To assist nail salons with compliance, the safety requirements are set out in this Circular.

Use products that comply with safety requirements

- a. Check that nail care products have been notified with the Health Sciences Authority (HSA), by checking [HSA's infosearch](#). Ensure that nail care products used do not contain prohibited chemicals and that restricted chemicals are used within the specified conditions of use by referring to the [Third Schedule of the cosmetic products regulation](#).
 - o For example:
 - Formaldehyde is not allowed to be added as an ingredient into all cosmetic products, including nail care products.
 - Toluene is only permitted in nail care products up to a maximum concentration of 25%.
 - o A cosmetic product containing prohibited chemicals or using restricted chemicals not within the specified conditions of use would be considered an unwholesome health product. A person who manufactures, imports, or supplies an unwholesome health product is liable to a fine of up to \$50,000 and/or imprisonment up to 2 years.
 - o If the product cannot be found on HSA's infosearch, inform your nail care product supplier to submit a notification via [HSA's website](#). A person who supplies an un-notified cosmetic product is liable to a fine of up to \$20,000 and/or imprisonment up to 12 months.

¹ Exposure to chemicals in nail care products may occur via three routes: (1) inhaling volatile organic compounds (VOCs such as formaldehyde, toluene, xylene) emitted from the products; (2) getting the products on skin or in eyes; or (3) ingesting the products that have come in contact with food or drinks. For example, exposure to formaldehyde can be through inhalation and this may lead to respiratory irritations, allergic reactions, and even long-term serious health effects such as cancer.

- b. Ensure that nail care products used comply with labelling requirements, including listing all ingredients on the product labels.
 - Inform your nail care product supplier to add a warning label of “Contains formaldehyde”, if their products contain permitted preservatives that can release formaldehyde² exceeding 0.05%.
 - A person who supplies a cosmetic product that does not comply with this labelling requirement is liable to a fine of up to \$50,000 and/or imprisonment up to 2 years.

Choose safer products

- c. Minimise chemical exposures by using products that are water-based or have a low content of volatile organic compounds (VOCs, such as formaldehyde, toluene, xylene).

Follow safe work practices

- d. Communicate to employees the hazards of handling nail care products, and encourage them to adopt safe work practices such as:
 - Good housekeeping, e.g. keep dispenser bottles closed when not in use, clean up spills immediately.
 - When applying nail care products, use only the amount needed to minimise chemical emissions into the air.
 - Dispose of waste containing nail care products in sealed bags or keep wastebins covered. Empty wastebins frequently.
 - Where needed, use personal protective equipment (PPE) such as gloves and goggles to protect employees' skin and eyes. Nail salon operators should refer to the information in product labels or information sheets and provide the appropriate PPEs where necessary.

Ensure good ventilation and indoor air quality

- e. Ventilate the space within the nail salon.
 - If the salon has an air-conditioning and mechanical ventilation system that provides outdoor air, check that the system is in good working condition.
 - In air-conditioned spaces with no outdoor air supply, consider opening doors and windows to facilitate air exchange when feasible. Additionally, consider using local exhaust systems such as portable ventilation machines or ventilated tables to minimise exposure to VOCs emitted.
- f. To maintain good indoor air quality for the wellbeing of customers and employees, operators may also refer to the advisory limits of specific VOCs in the [Singapore Standard SS554: Code Of Practice For Indoor Air Quality For Air-Conditioned Buildings](#).

² E.g. DMDM hydantoin, imidazolidinyl urea, sodium hydroxymethylglycinate, bromopol and glyoxal.

Check products notified with HSA	Submit notification to HSA
	
https://go.gov.sg/hsainfosearch	https://go.gov.sg/hsanotification

Useful resources

1. Stay Healthy and Safe While Giving Manicures and Pedicures – a Guide for Nail Salon Workers, U.S. Department of Labor, Occupational Safety and Health Administration, 2012, <https://www.osha.gov/Publications/3542nail-salon-workers-guide.pdf>
2. Controlling Chemical Hazards During the Application of Artificial Fingernails, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, 1999, <https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/99-112/default.html>
3. Information Sheet: Taking care of your chemical health and safety in nail bars and salons, Health and Safety Authority, Ireland. https://www.hsa.ie/eng/Publications_and_Forms/Publications/Chemical_and_Hazardous_Substances/Nail_Bars_Info_Sheet.pdf