

Story at-a-glance

- Hepatitis B is transmitted through contact with blood and/or body fluids of an infected person. Common routes of infection include IV drug abuse, sexual activity with an infected partner, and blood transfusion. But any procedure where contaminated tools can break your skin, such as manicures/pedicures, tattoos, or body piercings can spread the infection
- Fears about hepatitis B may lead some people to mistakenly assume vaccination is the best answer, but this vaccine is fraught with dangerous side effects
- Routine vaccination against hepatitis B for newborns began in 1991, but children rarely have detectable antibodies in the blood 7-10 years after vaccination, indicating that the inoculation does NOT provide lasting protection
- Aside from the potential of spreading infectious disease, certain manicure procedures and most nail polishes typically involve or contain a number of toxic chemicals that can wreak havoc if accidentally introduced into your body. Most problems arise due to chemicals getting into abrasions, which can easily occur if a nail file slips or if your cuticles are cut back too far

About 4.4 million Americans are living with chronic hepatitis -- and most of them have no idea they have it. A new study has shown that customers in nail salons could be putting themselves at risk for the deadly disease.

Many nail salons use sharp instruments, which carry a risk of infection if they are re-used.

I'm willing to bet many of my female readers enjoy getting their nails done. I know I enjoy having mine done periodically.

Aside from looking well-groomed, getting a manicure and/or pedicure is a good stress reliever too, I'm told.

But there *are* certain risks involved. To protect yourself from accidental exposure to diseases such as hepatitis, make sure scissors and clippers are disinfected after each use, and that only disposable files are used.

The same goes for the pedicure bath and all suction screens in the tubs.

You'd also be wise to always bring your own nail polish—ideally a non-toxic version, which I'll discuss in a moment—as the polish can be both a source of infectious contamination as well as adding to your toxic burden.

Woman's Health Channel reports:

"It's not just nail salons to watch out for... [Anyplace where you can get tattoos, ear piercing, body piercing, and even dental offices can put you at risk.]"

What is Hepatitis B?

"Hepatitis" means liver inflammation. The "A," "B" and "C" designations refer to the type of hepatitis virus involved. Symptoms of hepatitis A and B are very similar, and include:

- Abdominal pain
- Fever
- Fatigue
- Joint pain
- Jaundice (yellowing of the skin and whites of the eyes)

However, hepatitis B is often called "the silent killer" because as many as 95 percent of those with the disease exhibit no symptoms at all, until it's too late. The disease can progress unnoticed for years in some cases, and patients oftentimes learn they have chronic hepatitis B once they develop severe liver damage.

But as mentioned above, anytime you're getting tattooed or pierced, or even just getting a manicure or pedicure, you can be exposed to the virus via contaminated instruments breaking through your skin. The virus is spread through contact with blood and/or body fluids of an infected person. Common routes of infection include:

- IV drug abuse
- Sexual activity with an infected partner
- Blood transfusion using contaminated blood

Your nail polish may also add to your toxic burden (remember, women who use make-up on a daily basis can absorb almost 5 pounds of chemicals into their bodies each year, so every little bit certainly adds up). Dangerous chemicals commonly found in nail polish include:

- Dibutyl phthalates (DBP), known to cause lifelong reproductive impairments in male rats. According to the Environmental Working Group (EWG), dibutyl phthalates has been shown to damage the testes, prostate gland, epididymus, penis, and seminal vesicles in animals.
- Toluene is made from petroleum or coal tar. Chronic exposure linked to anemia, lowered blood cell count, liver or kidney damage, and may affect a developing fetus
- Formaldehyde
- Oxybenzone