



Sandra Alexcae  
Moren

## The Pedicure Nightmare

What has happened to the delightful experience a client expects when they visit a spa and/or nail salon? Many educated consumers are afraid to treat themselves to a pedicure and are spreading the word to their friends and complaining to their local Health Services. I recently got a phone call from a very disgruntled consumer who had a very scary experience with her pedicure. Jason Macdonald, an Environmental Health Officer in Edmonton, Alberta had given her my name as I have worked with the Health Inspectors very closely to ensure I know what is happening in Infection Control for the Esthetic and Hairstyling Health Guidelines. When creating/writing Procedures Manuals/ protocols for Spas/Salons, I ensure we have the latest information when it comes to Infection control.

As a spa/salon consultant, cosmetologist, educator and former spa director I am appalled at what is going on in the industry and believe that the consumer will drive the changes needed as they are tired of the dangerous health implications when having such unprofessional services/treatments. I have included the client's story as she shared it with me. We will call this disgruntled client Lori, and this is what she wrote to me after we discussed her experience on the phone.

"I have had an experience at a nail salon that led me to you, Sandra in order to see if there is any way my story can assist in the implementation of strict licensing requirements for anyone working in the personal care industry.

Now I've been quite ill for the last 8 years; I've battled and won against flesh eating disease, peritonitis, and have had a recently been diagnosed with a chronic staph infection. This infection is playing havoc with my life. I've had all my abdominal muscles removed as the flesh eating disease would not clear up. Since my surgeries I have been unable to work, to do most activities without pain, and of course I've been at the doctor or nurse at least once a week for over a year now and am ready to take back my life.

I have also been diagnosed as diabetic so proper foot care becomes an issue especially with the chronic infection. Losing a limb due to infection is a very realistic fear, and have no doubt that if the wound I now deal with were on a limb they would have already amputated the infected area. Anyway, as a diabetic I have to take particular care with trimming my toenails as well as looking after my feet as to ensure I don't get any sores or infections on my feet. I recently went to a nail salon here in Edmonton to have a pedicure.

I informed the woman looking after me that I was diabetic believing that she would know how to look after my feet properly. Part way through my service another customer walked in and was advised to wait 10 minutes. One young girl came in with a backpack after school and I'm assuming by her appearance she was a high school student and she was asked to take over my pedicure. She did a fine job, but she used the Pedi-knife on my feet which I refuse when asked permission. She went ahead with it so fast I didn't have a chance to tell her I usually don't get any cutting done being that I am so prone to infection. She also cut my cuticles which to my understanding once you've had it done you have to keep it up because they grow like crazy.

So my pedicure was finished and I was in the process of having a pretty little French Pedicure color to my nails when they asked me to move to a seat so they could use this station for another client. I then watched this young girl bring a spray bottle that said "Spic n' Span" over to the basin, she ran water through the basin then picked up the spic and span, the little cloth she brought and never used as well as the dirty tray of utensils that were from my pedicure, and brought them to the sink. She then rinsed them with water and put them beside what I believed was a sterilizer of some sort.

The next client who walked into the salon was then seated in the rinsed station, the UN-sterilized utensils and little stand were brought to UN-clean station and the basin was filled for the next service as I was leaving. While waiting for her service this client had stated that she had spent the day in the hospital and was walking with a cane as well as a very obvious limp. I know for sure that I have a Chronic Staph infection, which is a bacterium on every ones skin that never becomes a problem unless you have a compromised immune system. The station that was used for me was not sterilized at all prior to her pedicure. I am sickened at the thought that my staff infection could have made her condition worse.

The need to shower twice when I got home as well as to soak my feet in bleach had me calling Jason who then put me in touch with you, Sandra in order for me to offer my assistance in getting the proper regulations in place to ensure not only the safety, but also a positive experience to anyone wishing to pamper themselves just a bit."

After hearing Lori's story I had some questions for her which she answered. "They did not even ask my name or tell me their name when I came in the Salon and there was no form to fill in; I did tell them that I was a diabetic. They did the same with other clients; although I can't say whether or not they knew the other clientele. Yes, they wore blue gloves while they were doing my pedicure. To tell the truth your question brings up another concern, very rarely in the nail salons with reasonable prices will I find English speaking people. This particular establishment was operated by a family who did speak limited English. They did not have the products needed to sterilize, or the knowledge of what to do to prevent the spread of infection. I strongly doubt their procedures would have changed at all had I informed them of the infection."

A very sad story indeed for a personal services industry that is to create joyous experiences for the guest!! Pedicure infections are very easy to pick up if proper disinfection guidelines are not followed and can be extremely dangerous involving amputations and even death.

Guidelines have long been established by Health Canada for all Industries - Hospitals, Health Care Facilities, Swimming Pools, and Restaurants - including Spas & Salons.

**However, what was once considered acceptable for cleaning has now evolved to more stringent practices.**

So, what do I believe were some of the challenges after assessing this story and then what are some solutions:

- to start with we need to have stricter guidelines in licensing businesses who offer these services
- we also need to have stricter guidelines in certification of who can perform such services
- we could have stricter guidelines on what is taught in educational institutions offering pedicure education
- ongoing education and certification in keeping up-to-date with new health and safety challenges and new infection and sanitation guidelines and products
- on-going education for the public on what they need to expect in regards to infection and sanitation guidelines.

In response to the concerns of Infection Control within the Spa & Salon Industry; I asked Monica Wartenburg (National Educator in Advanced Foot Care-specializing in Infection Control Training; with 27 years esthetic experience in Face/Body and Nutrition) to express/share some views on the issue. "As a National Trainer we are accountable for providing this industry with the latest technologies / Chemistries for cleaning and disinfecting in accordance with Health Canada Standards. We work closely with these protocols set forth to ensure the well being of all consumers safety while providing the very in professional care.

Gym clubs are a good example - changing from hand towels with some blue solution to clean to a disposable wipe before and after each use of fitness equipment - all in the last 6-8 months! What about the SARS EPIDEMIC forcing Hospitals to re-analyze their cleaning practices? Everyone will remember the H1N1 frenzy!! - Warning everyone to stay at home if you are sick! Learn to wash your hands more thoroughly, cough in your sleeve - **STAY AT HOME IF YOUR HEALTH IS IN ANY WAY COMPROMISED.** Many business's especially restaurants and some spas and salons sat vacant in these epidemic times.

General trends of awareness have emerged with hand sanitizers used frequently throughout the day as well as wiping down laptops and cell phones.

Out of complete respect for the Spa and Salon World we are continuing to improve our cleaning practices while working with the Health Board. These practices include a complete chart of the clients Health and Medical background to ensure all protocols and safety measures are being met. Accel is a product produced by Virox, which is a company that produces Infection Control products that are used in many industries; Hospitals, RCMP, Nasa, Cruise Ships, etc. More important, Health Canada and Virox work together to ensure complete safety and infection control protocols are being met. "

**This article is intended as a wake-up call to owners and individuals that are performing pedicures!**



One of the greatest responsibilities we have as individuals in the Cosmetology Industry is to protect our client's health and safety as well as our own. In order to build a relationship based on trust and respect you must learn and utilize the regulations, standards and rules in this hands-on profession.

The highest levels of cleanliness and adherence to rigorous health standards are imperative to protect both the staff working in the facility and the clientele. Controlling infection and disease is a vital and important aspect of this profession, which can be attained by consistently following certain guidelines and procedures.

With all the new viruses we need to ensure our cleaning and disinfection procedures are adequate in accordance with Health Canada. What are you as an individual in this industry doing to ensure your own health and safety and that of your valued client?

