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# 14 "MMA"

## 15 1. Keeping Your Clients Educated

### 16 The Dangers of Methyl Methacrylate

17 Recently, increasing problems with the use of methyl methacrylate.  
18 (MMA) in the nail industry has caused numerous problems for acrylic  
19 nail wearers. Many "discount" nail salons are using MMA instead of  
20 acrylic liquid to cut down on costs, (MMA is approximately \$180  
21 cheaper per gallon than acrylic liquid.) This is why so many  
22 "discount" nail salons can charge such low prices.

23 The FDA has issued a warning to consumers that the use of MMA In  
24 discount nail salons is on the upswing, and is severely dangerous to  
25 unsuspecting clients. The best way to combat the problem the  
26 problem with MMA is to recognize the warning signs:

- Tingling or numbness of the fingers
- Whitening of the fingers
- Damaged nail beds
- Irritated skin around the nail bed
- Salons using MMA will have a markedly different smell to them than regular acrylic

27 Other signs may include:

- Difficulty in removing your clients acrylic nails (The MMA acrylic combination has a much harder surface than the pure acrylic combination.)
- Employees in the salon tend to wear masks to avoid the poisonous chemicals MMA gives out

28  
29 All of these signs may indicate that your client has been to a salon  
30 using MMA.

31 It is important to educate your clients on the dangers of MMA.

32 A well-trained nail tech using FDA approved products and using  
33 proper sanitation methods will not be afraid to answer any questions  
34 asked by their clients. Keeping your clients informed and educated  
35 will not only keep them loyal, it will keep them safe.

36 On the following page, we have provided a [sample write-up on "MMA](#)  
37 [Hazards"](#) explaining the hazards of MMA to your clients. This page  
38 can be printed [Or ctrl a (for select all) + ctrl c (for copy all) and with  
39 your word processor opened, do a ctrl v (for paste all) and you can  
40 set up the type style as you want.] and handed out to your clients in  
41 order to keep them informed and educated!

42

## 43 **2. The Importance of Sanitation**

### 44 **What Your Clients Need to Know**

45 Across the country, unsuspecting consumers are having  
46 their nails done by unlicensed manicurists working in unsafe  
47 nail salons. What many consumers don't know is that they  
48 are putting themselves at risk of serious infection and  
49 disease whenever they go to these salons.

50 Recent news segments focused their attention on unsafe  
51 nail salons, showing working conditions that would make any  
52 legitimate nail tech cringe. Such conditions included working  
53 with dirty implements, filthy work stations, salons with no  
54 disinfectant available, unlicensed manicurists working on  
55 patrons, employees using illegal blades and needles as well  
56 as many other serious violations.

57 Although State Board Inspectors are trying to crack down on  
58 these nail salons, they can't keep up with all of them. Many  
59 salons continue to operate, despite numerous violations,  
60 putting their unknowing clients at risk for infection and  
61 disease.

62 Without proper sanitation methods, patrons have been  
63 known to develop serious infections in their hands and feet.  
64 Some infections can lead to the disfigurement or even the  
65 loss of fingers and toes.

66 One news program told the story of a customer who  
67 developed a severe infection in her foot after a razor blade  
68 was used to remove dead skin from her heels. The infection  
69 become so severe, she had to be hospitalized and is now in  
70 a wheelchair. Other severe cases of infection include Staph  
71 infections, Hepatitis and even AIDS.

72 It is important to let your customers know that not all nail  
73 salons operate under these conditions. Keeping your  
74 customers educated about the rules and regulations set by  
75 the State Board of Cosmetology will give them an idea of  
76 what to look for in a good nail salon. Namely yours!

77 On the following page we have provided a flyer on the the  
78 importance of sanitation for you to photocopy and give to  
79 your clients.

80 On the following page, we have provided a sample write-up for  
81 "Keeping it Clean" explaining the importance of "Keeping it Clean" to  
82 your clients. This page can be printed [Or ctrl a (for select all) + ctrl  
83 c (for copy all) and with your word processor opened, do a ctrl v (for  
84 paste all) and you can set up the type style as you want.] and handed  
85 out to your clients in order to keep them informed and educated!

# "MMA"

86

## 3. What You Can Do To Prevent Exposure

87

88 (Hand out to your Clients)

## The Dangers of Methyl Methacrylate

89

90

91 **What is Methyl Methacrylate?** Methyl Methacrylate, (or MMA) is a  
92 liquid monomer banned for use in the nail industry by the Food and  
93 Drug Administration. MMA was used largely in the early 70's as an  
94 inexpensive substitute for conventional acrylic liquid. It was banned  
95 due to the severe poisonous reactions it caused in customers and  
96 nail techs.

97 **Why should I be concerned?** The use of MMA is on the rise in  
98 many "discount" nail salons to cut down on costs. (MMA is  
99 approximately \$180 cheaper per gallon than acrylic liquid.) This is  
100 one of the reasons why these types of salons can charge such low  
101 prices.

102 **What are some of the signs I should be aware of?** Nail salons  
103 using MMA will be very secretive about the brand names of the  
104 products they are using. Nail techs will wear masks to avoid the  
105 poisonous chemicals MMA gives out. Nails sculptured with MMA  
106 have a harder surface than regular acrylic nails and are very difficult  
107 and painful to remove. (Sometimes taking up to 2 hours.) Nail techs  
108 will use drills instead of files because the surface of the nail is so  
109 hard. There is also a distinctive odor to MMA, which is different from  
110 regular acrylic.

111 **What are some of the symptoms?** Some of the symptoms caused  
112 by the use of MMA include, (1) tingling or numbness of the fingers,  
113 (2) whitening of the fingers (3} Deformity of the fingernails, (4) Severe  
114 allergic reaction, or even contact dermatitis.

115 **What can I do to prevent exposure?** Recognizing the warning  
116 signs is the best way to prevent exposure. Always make sure your  
117 nail tech has his/her license visibly posted. Check to see if your nail  
118 tech is using products with name brand labels. Don't be afraid to ask

119 your nail tech questions about their products and procedures. A  
120 properly trained nail tech will be more than happy to answer your  
121 questions.

122 **Where can I get more information?** You can contact the Food and  
123 Drug Administration at (800) 270-8865, or look up the FDA web page  
124 at [www.FDA.gov](http://www.FDA.gov).

125

126 **4. Keeping it Clean**  
127 (Hand out to your Clients)

128 **What You Should Know About**  
129 **Sanitation?**

130 **Why should I worry about sanitation?** All salons must follow the  
131 rules and regulations given to them by The State Board of Barbering  
132 and Cosmetology. Without proper sanitation methods, clients can be  
133 exposed to harmful bacteria, which can cause serious infections.  
134 Many times, these infections, (such as Staph infections) can lead to  
135 the disfigurement of hands and feet and sometimes even the loss of  
136 fingers and toes. More severe cases can involve the contraction of  
137 Hepatitis, or even AIDS.

138 **What are some of the violations I should be aware of?**  
139 Unfortunately, the State Board can't keep up with every nail salon,  
140 and there are some salons that choose to ignore the rules. Some  
141 violations include not sanitizing implements, not washing hands  
142 before each client, dirty work stations, uncovered trash bins, reusing  
143 dirty paper towels and the illegal use of blades and needles.

144 **What can I do to keep myself safe?** Know what to look for  
145 whenever you go to a salon. Always take a look around the salon to  
146 make sure it is clean. Other signs to look for:

- 147 • Check to see that your nail technician has his/her license  
148 displayed. If it is not displayed, ask to see it.
- 149 • All implements and equipment should be properly sanitized  
150 before each use.
- 151 • Make sure nail technicians sanitize their hands before every  
152 client.
- 153 • Trash containers should have a proper lid or odor-free cover.
- 154 • A nail technician should never use any type of blade or needle  
155 on you.

156 • All containers should be labeled with a manufactures name.

157 Not all nail salons choose to ignore the rules. A good nail technician  
158 cares about the quality of service you receive as well as your health  
159 and safety. Ask questions about disinfectants and proper  
160 procedures. Quality nail salons will be more than happy to answer  
161 your questions.

162 **Where can I get more information?** For more information on  
163 proper sanitation procedures, or if you want to report a salon you feel  
164 is unsafe, contact the Consumer Affairs Hotline. In California call  
165 (800) 952-5210. You can also the State Board of Cosmetology or the  
166 Better Business Bureau in your State.

# METHYL METHACRYLATE (MMA)

## MMA: Unsafe for Nail Technicians

EMA is approved for use by Nail Technicians

### INTRODUCTION

Periodically, the Nail Manufacturers Council (NMC) will publish educational updates for nail technicians to keep them informed about current trends in the professional nail industry. This particular update addresses the ethical and legal use of nail enhancement products formulated with methyl methacrylate (MMA).

### METHYL METHACRYLATE LIQUID MONOMERS - "MMA"

In the infancy of the professional nail industry, methyl methacrylate (MMA) was a commonly used ingredient in professional nail products. These products were often referred to as "dental acrylics" or "porcelain nails." By the end of the 1970's the FDA had received so many complaints related to the use of MMA that it was forced to take action against several manufactures of these products.

MMA-related complaints ranged from skin allergy to permanent loss of the nail plate. It can also cause loss of sensation in the finger tips. As the problem became more serious, the FDA warned manufactures that further use of MMA in nail enhancement products was inappropriate. Liquid monomer products formulated with MMA were considered too dangerous for use in the beauty industry. In a recent review, Allen R. Halper of the FDA's Office of Cosmetics and Colors stated that the FDA considers MMA "to be a poisonous and deleterious substance" and may take regulatory action against any products containing methyl methacrylate monomer and may take legal action against those involved.

### METHYL METHACRYLATE POLYMER POWDERS - "MMA"

Nail technicians who are aware of the dangers of MMA are often confused when they discover that some acrylic powders contain this ingredient. The problems described above do not apply to the use of MMA polymers. In the fully polymerized and solid form, this substance is considered safe. Fully polymerized MMA will not cause adverse skin reactions or other problems associated with the liquid monomer.

199 When MMA is converted into a polymer it is called "polymethyl methacrylate" or PMMA. In the  
200 polymer form PMMA is chemically identical to Plexiglas™ or Lucite™ and is considered safe  
201 for use on natural nails.

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## **"EMA" - ETHYL METHACRYLATE LIQUID MONOMERS - "EMA" is Approved**

**EMA: The good monomer for Nail Technicians.** Most responsible manufactures formulate their liquid monomer with ethyl methacrylate (EMA) EMA is a larger molecule that has extra carbon and hydrogen atoms. The nail industry has had considerable experience with EMA, which has been declared safe for use by trained nail technicians by the prestigious Cosmetic Ingredients Review Board. Most responsible manufactures formulate their liquid monomer with ethyl methacrylate (EMA) EMA is a larger molecule that has extra carbon and hydrogen atoms. The nail industry has had considerable experience with EMA, which has been declared safe for use by trained nail technicians by the prestigious Cosmetic Ingredients Review Board.

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## **206 THE NMC'S RECOMMENDATION**

207 The Nail Manufacturers Council wants you to be informed about the potential dangers related  
208 to the use of MMA. We agree with the FDA that the use of liquid nail enhancement products  
209 containing MMA is unsafe and unwise. Anyone who manufactures, sells or distributes these  
210 potentially dangerous substances is breaking the law and endangering your health. Not only  
211 are they showing a disrespect for you and your clients, they are endangering the entire nail  
212 profession. Many State Boards of Cosmetology which regulate and license nail technicians  
213 have passed strict regulations forbidding the use of these products.

214 Serious adverse skin reactions and permanent nail deformities are only part of the risks of  
215 using MMA. Long term use of MMA may lead to permanent damage of the respiratory system.  
216 While not conclusive, those who use there products often wear dust masks hoping to obtain  
217 some protection. Although these masks are a great way to lower exposure to dust and other  
218 fillings, they provide ABSOLUTELY NO protection from MMA vapors. Also, MMA creates  
219 enhancements that are too rigid for the natural nail plate. MMA enhancements resist breaking  
220 if accidentally caught or jammed. This often leads to painful breakage of the nail plate near  
221 the cuticle which may result in severe infections. Nail technicians may be found legally liable  
222 if they knowingly use proucts containing MMA. In many states they may lose their professional  
223 licenses, be subject to criminal penalties and fines, and/or be sued by injured clients.

224

## **HOW CAN I TELL?**

**Since MMA is prohibited, you are unlikely to find it on the ingredient label. Still it is usually not difficult to tell if a product contains MMA. Here are three simple things to watch for.**

- 1. Unusually strong or strange odor which doesn't smell like other acrylic liquids.**
- 2. Enhancements which are extremely hard and very difficult to file even with coarse abrasives.**
- 3. Enhancements that will not soak off in solvents designed to remove acrylics.**

**DISCOUNT pricing can also be an indicator of MMA usage. MMA costs several times less than EMA.**

**The last sign in the list above is the most important indicator. Nail technicians who come across artificial nails made with MMA-containing ingredients are usually surprised to hear how difficult it is to remove the product. The only way to remove the products is by filing with a very coarse abrasive, ("such as a drill"), which usually results in further damage to the client's nail plates and nail beds.**

225

## **226 CLOSING THOUGHTS**

227 The Nail Manufacturers Council fully supports the FDA's position and recommends against nail  
228 technicians using liquid monomers which are formulated with MMA. We believe that the  
229 significant danger to both nail technicians and clients makes the use of MMA both unwise and  
230 unethical. In our opinion, the health risks and public relations problems created by the illegal  
231 use of MMA seriously threaten the entire professional nail industry.

232 If you think these products are being used, we recommend that you report your suspicions to  
233 your local State Cosmetology Board or other regulatory agency. If you know anyone engaged  
234 in selling or distributing liquid monomer products formulated with MMA, please report this  
235 information to the Nail Manufacturers Council at (312) 245-1595. You will be doing everyone in  
236 the industry a tremendous favor.

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