

# BYRDIE

## Should You Take Breaks Between Gel Pedicures? Nail Techs and a Derm Weigh In

written by KEYAIRA BOONE | PUBLISHED ON 04/06/24



**I**f you've ever had a gel pedicure, you know how great it feels to breeze out of the nail salon, past all the dryers, without worrying about messing up your new polish. This style is ideal for hanging out at the pool or beach because the gel's strength prevents it from showing wear and tear, but like its corresponding manicure, the gel pedicure comes with risks and rewards. It allows the wearer to avoid worrying about cracks and dents, but it also has the potential to negatively impact nail health in the long run. Ahead, we turned to nail techs and a dermatologist to find out if you need to take breaks from gel pedicures in order to keep your nails in their best state.

## MEET THE EXPERTS

- Marie Stanton is a licensed nail technician based in Brooklyn with 22 years of experience.
- Tahra Clarke is a licensed nail technician and the owner of Artistry Salon Studio in Atlanta, Georgia.
- Lisa Allen is the founder of Newark, New Jersey's Bella Nail Lounge.
- **Jody Alpert Levine, MD, is the director of dermatology at Plastic Surgery & Dermatology of NYC.**

## What Are Gel Pedicures?

**Gel pedicures are long-lasting pedicures cured with UV light.** They're virtually chip-proof, and they hold up over a significant amount of time without losing their luster. They're also less susceptible to wear and tear by saltwater and chlorine than standard pedicures. This makes them a great option for special occasions, traveling, or any time when rushing back to your favorite nail salon might not be the most convenient option. "I think the primary benefit to most people is they can last a little bit longer for them than a traditional pedicure," says Bella Nail Lounge founder Lisa Allen.

According to licensed nail tech Marie Stanton, gel pedicures are appealing "because gel is so convenient" for the wearer—and we can see why. While they do require a more involved removal process to safely lift the polish from the nail plate, unlike traditional pedicures—which can include up to 30 long minutes sitting under fans to dry the polish—they don't require any drying time. Once your pedicurist has applied and cured the base coat, colored gel, and the appropriate top coat, you can simply skip your way out of the salon: no courtesy flip-flops required.

## Are Gel Pedicures Safe?

**Gel pedicures are safe in moderation, but they're not ideal for all the time, especially if you don't tend to prioritize upkeep.** "I do think it's okay for short-term wear, like your wedding, birthday, or vacationing," Stanton says. Allen agrees: For best results, she recommends "maintaining them all year long" and "ensuring that they're soaking them off to have the gel replaced."

We know it can be tempting to keep gel pedicures on for as long as possible because they hold up so well, but Allen advises against "leaving them on for extended periods of time." She tells us, "I wouldn't go past three weeks before I came in for my next gel pedicure."

"The removal process of gel polish can inflict significant harm on natural toenails, making it unsuitable for long-term wear," warns licensed nail tech and Artistry Salon Studio owner Tahra Clarke. Additionally, overall nail health is a huge factor in whether or not you're a good candidate for a gel pedicure. **"If somebody's nails are weak to begin with, then they'll be quicker to get affected by the process," Dr. Jody Levine explains.**

## Should You Take Breaks from Gel Pedicures?

**While gel pedicures can be enjoyable, it's best to take breaks from them from time to time to maintain your nail health.** Plastic Surgery & Dermatology of NYC's director of dermatology, **Jody Alpert Levine, MD,** says that it can be beneficial to give your fingernails and toenails a rest from the curing process every so often. "I do think it is smart to give your nails a break in between gel manicures," she tells Byrdie.

Unsure of when to take a break? Examine your nail health to determine what's best. "You need to assess your nails," **Dr. Levine** emphasizes. "If you see that your nails are breaking or cracking and appear brittle, then that's the right time to take a break from gel manicures or pedicures."

## **Gel Pedicure Alternatives to Try**

**There are no dryer time-free options to compete with gel pedicures, but there are some picks that make improvements upon regular polish for a longer-lasting result.** Sally Hansen's Miracle Gel (\$8) offers a similar thickness, durability, and shine to gel pedicures, but the line doesn't require a UV light, making it easy and safe to apply and remove at home. Improvements in top coats, like CND's Top Coat Longwear Nail Polish (\$8) and Essie's Gel Setter Top Coat (\$11), also offer strong, high-quality alternatives to gel pedicures. These types of sealants are hefty without being as difficult to remove.

## **The Final Takeaway**

**Gel pedicures are a great option to achieve a long-lasting pedicure with minimal dry time, especially if you're traveling or have a special occasion coming up.** Keeping them updated is key to a good experience and optimal nail health, though, so either commit to getting regular pedis (or getting yours removed in a timely manner) or consider other options for high-quality, chip-free polish.