

**Health Canada advises Canadians not to use cosmetic nail preparations  
containing MMA  
Advisory 2003-32 May 22, 2003  
For immediate release...**

OTTAWA - Health Canada is advising Canadians that the use of the ingredient methyl methacrylate (MMA) in cosmetic nail preparations is unsafe. The strong adhesion properties of MMA can cause painful tearing and possible permanent loss of the natural nail, should the artificial nail be jammed or caught. Allergic reactions to MMA include red skin rashes, contact dermatitis, itching and/or small oozing blisters in the affected area. MMA may also cause irritation to the nose and throat, as well as headaches.

The use of MMA as a cosmetic ingredient poses a risk to the health and safety of consumers. Section 16 of the Food and Drugs Act states that no cosmetic may cause injury to the health of the user.

No cosmetic products containing MMA are to be sold in Canada. However, some cosmetic products containing MMA may still be available on the Canadian marketplace. If you suspect that MMA is being used at your local nail salon, contact your nearest Health Canada Product Safety Office.

MMA is used together with acrylic powder to fill the natural fingernail area and the area on top of the applied nail tip. It is most commonly found in cosmetic nail preparations used at salons performing cosmetic nail services. However, retail nail kits may also contain MMA. Before receiving a nail service at a salon, ask the technician to confirm what material is being used in the nail builder.

Here are some things to look for if you suspect that MMA is being used:  
A pungent chemical odour that can cause dizziness or lightheadedness.  
Enhancements that are extremely hard and very difficult to file, even with coarse abrasives.

Enhancements that will not soak off in solvents designed to remove acrylics; often the manicurist has to grind the MMA nail down to the real nail.

Low cost of full sets of acrylic nails and of touch-up procedures (nail preparations containing MMA are generally one third the price of safer alternatives).  
Unlabelled containers: technician will not show or tell you what brand of product is being used.

Health Canada currently permits the use of ethyl methacrylate (EMA) and other methacrylate polymers as cosmetic ingredients in nail preparations in Canada. You may also use the following alternatives to acrylic nails:

Light-cured gels

These products are applied with a small brush, then placed under an ultraviolet light in

order for the product to harden. There is no combining of products, so if a salon uses a mixture of liquid and powder, this is not a gel.

#### Wraps

Wrap products include silk, linen and fibreglass. Mesh is applied over the nail or tip, then a resin is brushed over the entire nail. An activator is sometimes used to speed up the set of the resin.

#### Natural nail manicures

This service does not involve the application of a nail-building product.

For further information, contact your nearest Health Canada Product Safety Office:

Vancouver, British Columbia (604) 666-5003 [Bby\\_Prodsafe@hc-sc.gc.ca](mailto:Bby_Prodsafe@hc-sc.gc.ca)

Calgary, Alberta (403) 292-4677 [Cal\\_Prodsafe@hc-sc.gc.ca](mailto:Cal_Prodsafe@hc-sc.gc.ca)

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