

## SO MANY SALONS: HOW DO YOU CHOOSE?

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reprinted from *Florida Wise Magazine, April, 2007*

Did you ever wonder what the difference is between acrylics done at a “budget shop” and those done at a “high-end salon?” The difference goes much deeper than price, and the educated consumer should understand why.

Start with the cost. Why would one salon pay over \$200.00 a gallon for top-of-the line acrylic when cheaper acrylics are available for \$20.00? It is true that the bargain shop can give you a bottom-dollar price. But the reality is that the high-end salon understands the drawbacks to inexpensive acrylics and won't use them.

Why, you ask? Here's the answer: the cheaper acrylic adheres so strongly to the nail bed that the uneducated consumer thinks it is a better product. But that cheaper acrylic can create trouble down the road. The nail technician needs to drill harder with each successive fill, creating unsightly fill lines. Drill lines – which you should *never* see or feel on your nails – indicate that the process is thinning out your natural nail plate, making you more prone to infection. Further, these cheaper acrylics often contain the illegal ingredient MMA (methyl methacrylate). These acrylics bond so strongly to the soft tissue that even a slight trauma to the nail can cause the natural nail to break and lift off the nail bed. The end-result can be serious nail breaks, infection and loss of the nail plate. High-end salons use softer acrylics which give a superb, finished look with no drill lines. Not only do they look better, but they adhere just as well without the safety risks.

Removing the cheaper acrylics requires a different process as well. A high-end acrylic can be softened by soaking it in solvent for 20 minutes and then drilling off the melted material. Budget acrylics are solvent-resistant and would take hours to soften with soaking. Many salons remove them by wedging a plastic tip under the nail and “popping” them off. This process causes extreme trauma to the nail plate. You should stay clear of any salon which uses this technique.

In addition to regular acrylics, today's “pink and whites” have become all the rage. A high-end salon will hire “Pink and White Specialists” who have developed the art of creating the perfect “smile line” (where the white meets the pink) with just the sweep of a brush. Lower-end salons shortcut the method by using white tips to create their smile lines

which results in an unnatural look, especially for those with shorter nail beds.

So how does your salon measure up? Do they tell you what brand of acrylic they use? Do they specialize in Pink and Whites or do they use white tips? Do they soak nails for removal? Do they offer you a two-week guarantee against breakage and lifting? And lastly, do they allow you to select the nail tech that works best for you so that you can build a relationship with her, or are you forced to use whichever tech is available next?

Always choose a salon where you feel confident that they put you, the customer, first – your needs, your health, and your safety. Now that you know the difference, choose wisely.