

C A L I F O R N I A

*healthy
nail salon*



C O L L A B O R A T I V E

“You can’t imagine how many chemicals are being used by workers in nail salons everyday. We do not have enough knowledge about the health hazards of the products we are using.”

—Connie Nguyen, a California cosmetologist who has suffered respiratory problems from working in beauty salons for 13 years.

About the Collaborative

The California Healthy Nail Salon Collaborative was created in 2005 out of growing concern for the health and safety of nail salon and other cosmetology workers, owners, and consumers. The Collaborative uses policy advocacy, research, industry advocacy outreach, and education strategies to address health and safety concerns facing these communities. Our mission is to advance a preventative environmental health agenda for the nail salon sector in California.

The Collaborative’s members include nail salon workers and owners, non profit and community organizations focused on environmental and reproductive health/justice, labor and Asian American community health, educational institutions, and government agency allies.

The Nail Salon Industry and Environmental Health

In California and throughout the United States, the beauty industry is booming. “Manis and pedis” are all the rage as customers want to be pampered with the latest nail designs, colors, and styles. Over the last twenty years, nail salon services have tripled and cosmetology is now the fastest growing profession in California.

Currently there are approximately 115,000 nail salon technicians in California, and most are women of color. Of these women, 59-80% are estimated to

be Vietnamese immigrants, and more than 50% are of childbearing age. Many nail salon workers earn less than \$18,200 a year and work in conditions that can be hazardous to their health.

On a daily basis, nail salon workers handle numerous solvents, glues, and other nail care products. These contain many chemicals known to and suspected of causing acute and chronic illnesses including cancer, respiratory problems, skin problems and reproductive harm. There is very little state and federal government regulation of the chemicals used in these products. Also, little research has been done on the health issues that nail salon workers experience from long-term exposure to these chemicals. In fact, there are over 10,000 chemicals used in personal care and nail products and yet 89% have not been tested independently for their impacts on human health. Nail salon workers and other cosmetologists are at greater risk for health issues related to their work because of various challenges such as language and cultural barriers, and lack of access to health care. In addition, there is not enough culturally and linguistically appropriate education and outreach to this diverse population.

Through the California Healthy Nail Salon Collaborative, advocates are working together at the intersection of workers rights, women’s rights, environmental and reproductive health/justice, and Asian American community health to advance greater worker health and safety for this sector.

Collaborative Activities

The Collaborative meets on a quarterly basis and also has active subcommittees (policy advocacy, outreach/education, industry advocacy and research) to share information, strategize and engage in coordinated activities to support its mission.

POLICY ADVOCACY

- Ensuring effective implementation of California's Safe Cosmetics Act
- Coordinating legislative hearings on nail salon worker health and safety issues with elected officials
- Co-sponsoring SB 549 to collect language, gender, and ethnicity data from cosmetology, nail and hair salon licensees
- Successfully advocating to the Board of Barbering and Cosmetology (BBC) to translate materials into Vietnamese and to create improvements in their regulatory and punitive procedures
- Working with Cal/OSHA and HESIS on a nail salon workplace health and safety guidance document
- Working with Cal/OSHA to pilot consultation site visits to salons in the Bay Area
- Created a policy report to share important policy recommendations to improve the health and safety of nail and cosmetology communities
- Successfully advocated to establish lower Cal/OSHA permissible exposure limits (PELs) for toluene from 50ppm to 10ppm.

OUTREACH & EDUCATION

- Creating Nail Salon Owner & Worker Advisory Committees in Northern and Southern California to provide guidance and accountability in the Collaborative's work
- Directly engaging nail salon workers and owners in identifying issues of concern and developing solutions to support the nail salon workforce and small businesses
- Outreaching to and partnering with various cosmetology and beauty care sectors including African American and Latino salons
- Co-hosted community forums throughout California
- Speaking publically about the Collaborative's work at community and conference presentations
- Publishing the article "The US Nail Salon Industry: Booming Business, Growing Concern" with the National Healthy Nail Salon Alliance in Women & Environments Magazine (www.weimag.com)
- Worked with California's Senate Office of Research on a policy report entitled "Pedicures at the What Price"
- Partnering to launch the National Healthy Nail Salon Alliance to advance similar work on a national level.

RESEARCH

- Hosting a national research convening in April 2009 to create and publish a research agenda for the nail salon and cosmetology sectors
- Publishing a research convening summary report in Summer 2009
- Providing leadership to state and national efforts working to advance a healthy nail salon agenda, comprehensive chemical policy reform, and other environmental health initiatives.

Recommendations

Advocates, nail salon and cosmetology workers, scientists, and others are coming together to develop a multifaceted platform to support the removal of harmful chemicals from nail salon products to assure greater worker health and safety. Below are a set of key short- and long-term recommendations for reducing nail salon and cosmetology workers' exposures to toxic chemicals.

SHORT TERM

1. Manufacturers must reformulate nail products to eliminate toxic ingredients of known concern.
2. Nail salon and cosmetology workers should be provided with better safety information and training on toxic exposure.
3. Ventilation in many salons should be improved to decrease toxic chemicals in the ambient air.

LONG TERM

1. Work to secure the passage of a national legislation to prevent the use of toxic chemicals in cosmetic products.
2. Give the US FDA the authority to regulate cosmetic ingredients.
3. Conduct more research on the long-term health effects of chronic low-level exposure to toxic chemicals and frequent high exposures found in salon products.
4. Develop safer/greener chemicals for use in nail salon products that currently have no non-toxic alternatives.

Collaborative Members

- Alameda County Public Health Nursing
- Asian Advocacy Project of Community Action Marin
- Asian Americans for Civil Rights & Equality
- Asian Communities for Reproductive Justice
- Asian Health Services
- Asian Law Caucus
- Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum
- Asian Pacific American Legal Center
- Bay Area and Southern California Nail Salon Workers & Owners
- Breast Cancer Action
- Breast Cancer Fund
- CA Department of Public Health, HESIS
- California Pan Ethnic Health Network
- Center for Environmental Health
- Coalition for Clean Air
- Environmental Finance Center, Region 9
- National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum
- Northern California Cancer Center
- Orange County Asian Pacific Islander Community Alliance
- Planned Parenthood Golden
- Physicians for Social Responsibility - L.A.
- United Food & Commercial Workers Div 5
- United Hair and Nail Association
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Region 9
- Women's Voices of the Earth
- Worksafe

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