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BEACH READY *beauty*

25 quick fixes to get your glow on

ROBYN LAWLEY

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nails *now*

Mix 'n' match: Whether to match or clash is up to you. "There are no rules when it comes to what colour you should paint fingers and toes," says YSL nail ambassador Frances Catsaros, who works out of Sydney's La Boutique. "If you're concerned about pulling off those fun shades, maybe stick to neutrals on your fingers and experiment with colour on your toes."

Shape up: We're still in a squoval moment (that's straight across the top with slightly curved edges). Keen to try the longer, almond shape seen on Adele and Rihanna? Catsaros warns that "taking too much off the sides for the oval shape can weaken the nail and the length is not practical for real life".

Art show: Is nail art over? "Yes!" asserts Catsaros. "I hope those enhancements and graphics are dead and buried."

salon *style*

If you're the type of woman who has a weekly appointment at her local nail bar, you probably already know these dos and don'ts. But just in case ...

Ban the blade: "It's actually illegal for manicurists and beauticians to use a blade to shave off dead skin – only a podiatrist can do that," warns Catsaros. Cutting off hardened skin may leave your soles feeling immediately smoother, but the effect is temporary as "skin repairs itself by growing back thicker".

Cut it out: "Never let anyone cut your cuticles, at least not around the top of the nail," says Catsaros. "If your cuticles have been pushed back and there are still dry bits hanging, that can be cut."

Fan yourself: "There's no harm putting your hands and feet under a lamp to speed up drying time, especially if you're in a hurry, but sometimes the heat can bring polish to a boiling point and lead to bubbling," explains Catsaros. Your best bet: five minutes in front of a fan.

1 2 3 4 5

toolkit

1. Feet by O.P.I Callus Foot File, $29.95. 2. BeautyPro Cuticle Pusher, from $11.95. 3. Scholl Eulactol Heel Balm Gold, $13.49. 4. Burt's Bees Lemon Butter Cuticle Cream, $14.95. 5. CND Glossing Buffer Block, $8.95.

the *bright* stuff

If polish has left your nails looking yellow, try one of these brighteners

‹ *L'Oréal Paris La Manicure 7 In 1 Saviour, $8.95*, treats signs of stress, like yellowing, with argan oil and vitamin E.

‹ *Revitanail Whitening Glow, $14.95*, instantly improves the look of stained nails.

‹ Sheer and shiny, *Dior Nail Glow, $39*, leaves nail beds looking pinker and tips whiter.

HOME ADVANTAGE

Give your DIY pamper session a professional edge

1 Care for cuticles
"Everything starts with the cuticle – that's what keeps nails at their optimum health," explains Catsaros, who prefers cuticle creams to oils, which "tend to sit on top". Apply cream before filing or buffing, and always run a remover-soaked cotton pad over nails before you apply polish to eliminate excess oil.

2 Buff gently
Over-buffing can thin out the nail bed, so Catsaros usually does "a light buff with the first side of the buffer and then I finish with the third side. I only do the three-step buffing process once a month."

3 Single file
Filing nails in one direction is preferable, but Catsaros concedes that this "can be hard when you're doing your own nails. I often file in both directions to achieve even sides." To minimise splitting, choose a gentle file and work slowly.

4 First base
Forming a layer between the nail and polish helps reduce the likelihood of stained nail beds, so "always use a base coat, or, at the very least, a combination base and topcoat", advises Catsaros.

5 Top it off
To prevent chips and extend the life of a mani, "I always finish with a thin, horizontal layer of topcoat across the edge of the nail," says Catsaros. □