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### Board of Cosmetology Issues Safety Advisory on Footbaths

The South Carolina Board of Cosmetology has learned of two cases of Mycobacterium skin infections in people who have had pedicures in salons in the state.

The two incidents were confirmed by the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) in the Spartanburg and Charleston areas. In both cases, the Board ordered the businesses to immediately cease and desist using the footbaths where the Mycobacterium was discovered.

These infections are very dangerous and are resistant to standard antibiotic therapy, and therefore can require months of extensive medical treatment.

The Board has issued an alert to its salon licensees across the state, warning them of these incidents. Salon operators have been reminded of the proper procedures to follow in disinfecting footbaths.

DHEC's Acute Disease and Epidemiology Division has informed the Board of Cosmetology that its office has issued a health advisory to physicians across the state.

Below is a copy of the proper procedures for disinfecting footbaths that was sent to salons in this state.

#### Required Footbath Disinfection

##### After each client:

Step 1: Empty contaminated water; remove all debris from foot spa.

Step 2: Sanitize the surface and walls with soap or detergent to remove visible debris. Rinse with clean, clear water.

Step 3: Disinfect and spray with one of the following, leaving this material in the foot bath for at least 10 minutes or as per manufacturer's instructions (if a hospital grade disinfectant is used):

An EPA approved hospital grade disinfectant that is tuberculocidal. Household bleach diluted 1 to 10 (one part bleach to 9 parts of water). This solution must

part bleach to 7 parts of water). This solution must be prepared fresh daily.

Step 4: Wipe footbath dry and refill with clean, clear water.

#### **At the End of the Day:**

Step 1: Perform all steps required for cleaning after each client.

Step 2: Remove the screen/filter and clean any trapped debris in front and back of the screen.

Step 3: Clean the screen with soap or detergent and rinse with water.

Step 4: Totally submerge the screen in one of the following for at least 30 minutes:

An EPA approved hospital grade disinfectant that is tuberculocidal.

Household bleach diluted 1 to 10 (one part bleach to 9 parts of water). This must be prepared fresh daily.

Step 5: Remove all debris in the intake water pipe that lies behind the screen

Step 6: Before replacing the screen, flush the system with low sudsing soap and warm water for 10 minutes. Then rinse, dry and let air-dry.

Step 7: The following morning, rinse and refill the footbath with clean, clear water.

#### **Weekly:**

Step 1: Perform all steps required for end of the day cleaning of the foot spa.

Step 2: Fill the foot spa with household bleach diluted 1 to 10 (one part bleach to 9 parts of water).

Step 3: Circulate the solution through the jets for 5-10 minutes

Step 4: Let the solution sit overnight (6-10 hours)

Step 5: The following morning, before first client, drain and flush system with clean, clear water.

Step 6: Blow out the jets for 3-5 seconds to remove any water remaining.

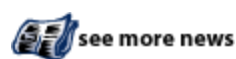
#### **Safety Tips for Pedicure Salon Customers**

If you go to a nail salon for a pedicure, your feet may be soaked in a whirlpool footbath before your pedicure. There is a chance that soaking your feet in the footbath may cause skin infections on your feet and legs. This is due to an organism called mycobacteria.

Mycobacteria are found in soil and tap water and don't usually cause infections. But they may be found in high numbers in the whirlpool footbaths used in nail salons unless the footbaths are cleaned and disinfected properly. You can reduce your chances of getting these infections by following these steps:

- Check to see if the salon has a license issued by the State Board of Cosmetology. Make sure your cosmetologist has a license posted at his or her workstation. You can search for a licensed pedicure salon online by using the Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation's licensee look-up link.
- If the salon appears even the slightest bit dirty, leave. Bad signs are dirty towels and foul smells.
- Do not shave your legs on the day you are going to get a pedicure. The small nicks and cuts caused by shaving can increase the chances that the mycobacteria, if present in the water, will cause skin infections.
- Avoid using the whirlpool footbaths if you have any open wounds, cuts, or scratches on your feet or legs. Open wounds and cuts can provide a way for the bacteria to get into the skin and cause infections.
- Ask whether the foot spas have been cleaned and disinfected. The South Carolina Board of Cosmetology has developed recommended cleaning and disinfecting steps that all nail salons should follow to make sure the footbaths are safe for use. The use of properly cleaned footbaths will reduce the chances that you will get a skin infection after using them.
- Insist on fresh soapy water for foot soaking.
- Make sure your pedicurist has washed his/her hands before touching your feet. Making sure their hands are clean is a good way to keep germs from spreading to your skin.
- Check that nail instruments are properly sanitized. Even better: Bring your own nail tools.
- Ask the pedicurist to push back cuticles instead of clipping or cutting them. Cuticles keep bacteria from getting under the nail bed.
- Look out for illegal equipment. Razor blades that are sometimes used to cut calluses off the feet are considered unsafe and are definite no-nos in salons in South Carolina.
- If you do get sores on your feet or legs, and they aren't healing, see your doctor. Tell him or her if you recently had a pedicure or a treatment with a whirlpool footbath.

If you suspect a pedicure salon is not following strict health and safety guidelines, you are urged to file a complaint with the State Board of Cosmetology who will investigate your claims.



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