

MARSHALL MEDICAL CENTERS
INFECTION CONTROL - FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS
ARTIFICIAL FINGERNAIL GUIDELINES

Q: What is Marshall Medical Center's policy on artificial fingernail enhancements?

A: Artificial nail enhancers are restricted due to the increase risk of colonization and transmission of pathogens to patients.

Q: What healthcare workers and staff are affected by the restrictions?

A: All healthcare providers/staff that have direct patient contact, directly supervise patient care or have contact with patient care supplies, equipment or food.

Q: What are artificial fingernail enhancements?

A: Any material applied to the nail for the purpose of strengthening or lengthening the nails including but not limited to: overlays, gels, wraps, acrylics, tips, tapes, nail piercing jewelry of any kind and any appliques other than those made of nail polish.

Q: What if I have artificial fingernails applied for vacation and I come into work with them on?

A: Each employee has a responsibility for maintaining hand hygiene, which includes the removal of artificial fingernail enhancements and trimming long, natural nails, as defined by the policy before working.

Q: Is nail polish allowed?

A: Yes but must be intact nail polish, without cracks or chips, and is easily removed by wiping clean with acetone polish remover. Colors of nail polish must conform to the hospitals dress code policy.

Q: What are the guidelines for my nails?

A: Fingernails must be kept short, clean and healthy; nail should not extend past the fingertips. Cleaning must include careful attention to cleaning around the base of the nails, cuticles as well as undersides of nail tips when washing hands.

Q: Why are nail enhancements such as artificial nails, wraps, tips, acrylics, gels, etc. no longer permitted for these staff?

A: Employees have a responsibility for maintaining hand hygiene by adhering to specific infection control practices. Artificial fingernail enhancements contribute to nail changes that can increase the risk of colonization and transmission of pathogens to patients. Outbreaks of infections have been traced to the artificial fingernails of health care workers. For those reasons they are prohibited for anyone having patient contact.

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Q: I already use good hand hygiene techniques. Won't that prevent contamination or colonization even if I have artificial nail enhancers?

A: Studies have shown that hospital personnel with nail enhancements can have more bacteria both before and after hand washing than personnel with natural nails. Long natural nails can also harbor bacteria.

Q: If I wear gloves doesn't that protect the patient?

A: Gloves are not a substitute for hand washing and artificial nails may harbor organisms and prevent effective hand washing. Long nails, artificial or natural, may cause gloves to tear more readily.

Q: Where can I find the policy to learn more about artificial fingernail enhancements?

A: The policy can be found on the portal under Policy and Procedures, Infection Control section, under ARTIFICIAL FINGERNAIL GUIDELINES.

Q: Who can I contact if I have a question about artificial fingernails?

A: You may contact one of the Infection Preventionist below or your supervisor.

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