



FIRST AID FOR DRY HANDS

Medical professionals are always washing up, which can lead to dry and cracked skin. What do they know that we don't about keeping hands soft and healthy? Nanci Bruce, R.N., a nursing instructor in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, advises her students to use Cetaphil Moisturizing Cream. Other faves of doctors and nurses: Eucerin Original Moisturizing Lotion and Aveeno Intense Relief Hand Cream.

Q: My nails are a mess-splitting and peeling. What's up?

A: THE MANICURIST (Myrdith Leon McCormack, manicurist and creator of M2M nail polish)

SAYS: Everyone's nails suffer in the fall because the air is suddenly so much drier. Remedy: Sneak in a little more pampering. "It's an important time to get or give yourself regular manicures," she explains. "People think a manicure is all about the color, but that's just the finishing touch. It's about the care of your nails, including shaping and pushing back cuticles." In between manis, keep nails hydrated with a moisturizer or a nail oil that contains fast-absorbing vitamin E. And always use a strengthening base coat and top coat that contain ingredients like protein, for "a little extra protection against the elements," she says.

A: THE DERMATOLIST (Heidi Waldorf, M.D., Mount Sinai Medical Center in NYC) **SAYS:** With the onset of cold and flu season, you're probably washing your hands and using hand sanitizers a lot more, and all that repeated exposure to water and alcohol can dry out your nails. Unfortunately, Waldorf says, "there's no quick fix once nails become brittle-they have to grow out." But if you take care of the skin around your nails, they'll look better right away. Slather on a hand cream with ingredients such as glycerin, petrolatum, and dimethicone, then wear a pair of cotton gloves to bed. It seems old-fashioned, but gloves really will help the cream penetrate for more intense moisturizing.

A: THE DIETICIAN (Elisa Zied, R.D., registered dietician) **SAYS:** "Nails that are brittle, discolored, peeling or splitting can be an indication of a nutrient deficiency-especially if you're a vegetarian, since meats are a rich source of highly absorbable iron," Zied says. If you're low on iron-as about 9 percent of women ages 12-49 are-supplements can help, but Zied recommends food as the best first defense. So dig in to iron-rich chicken, beef, and clams, or plant sources such as fortified cereals, soybeans, lentils, and kidney beans. And boost your intake of vitamin C, which can help your body better absorb iron. Biotin, a B vitamin, is also key for healthy nails; find it in whole-wheat bread, egg yolks, and cheese.