

# Beauty

## Smooth Hands & Healthy Nails

BY ALISA HRUSTIC

If the eyes are the windows to your soul, then your hands are the doorways to your health. Trouble with your skin and nails can signal issues from minor manicure woes to serious underlying conditions. Here's what dermatologists want you to know about five common concerns.

### DRY, CHAPPED HANDS

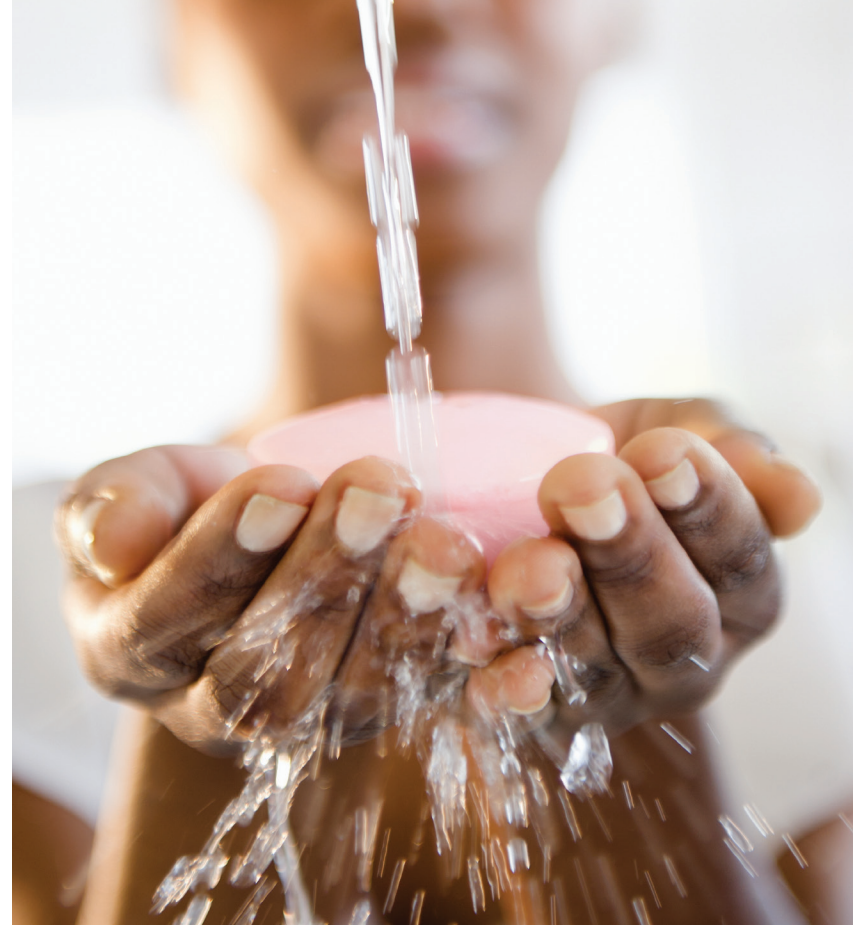
Most often your hands get that sandpaper feeling because you're constantly washing them. Using extra-hot water and harsh soap further weakens the skin barrier, meaning it can't maintain hydration as well, says Rhonda Klein, M.D., a board-certified dermatologist and cofounder of Modern Dermatology in Westport, CT. Cue the dryness, cracking, and itching. Other common culprits include alcohol-based

products (looking at you, hand sanitizer), the chemicals in cleaning products, lots of sun exposure, and frigid temps.

### THE FIX Keep hand cream in your bag.

Switch to a gentler soap when possible and lather up under lukewarm (not scorching) water. Then immediately apply a hand cream, especially during colder seasons when there's less moisture in the air. Look for a lotion that packs hydrating ceramides or hyaluronic acid and a skin soother like aloe or oatmeal. Dealing with cracking? Spot-treat the area with a petrolatum-based ointment to protect the open skin without getting too greasy.

**PREVENTION PICK:** Aveeno Skin Relief Hand Cream, \$7, drugstores



### NAILS THAT CONSTANTLY BREAK

This could be due to physical stress (thanks to your hands-on job or anxious biting habit), nutrient gaps, or a skin condition around the nail like eczema or psoriasis, says Michele Farber, M.D., a board-certified dermatologist at Schweiger Dermatology Group in New York City. But if you've checked in with a doc and there's no underlying health problem, you may simply be overdoing

it on the polish or gel manicures, both of which cause brittleness over time.

### THE FIX Give them a breather.

Take a break from the polish for at least a month. "Anything with nails will take a bit of time to see change," says Dr. Farber. While your nails are building up durability again, keep them clipped short, filed smooth, and consistently moisturized. Using a nail-strengthening lacquer, which contains ingredients to help reinforce the nail, can also be

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helpful, Dr. Farber says.

**PREVENTION PICK:** OPI Nail Envy Original Nail Strengthener, \$18, [ulta.com](http://ulta.com)

## SUN SPOTS ON YOUR HANDS

Those dots and freckles are solar lentigines. The benign discolorations are caused by UV rays, which prompt your cells to overproduce melanin.

**THE FIX** Find a new use for your retinol.

Prevention is key here, but if you didn't apply SPF to your hands when you were younger, it's not too late to turn things around, Dr. Farber says. Apply your go-to retinol cream to your hands before bed to encourage new, healthier skin cells in that area. Over time, it can help fade the spots and improve the overall texture of your hands. No luck? Talk to your dermatologist about light and laser therapies, Dr. Klein says.

**PREVENTION PICK:** RoC Retinol Correxion Deep Wrinkle Night Cream, \$25, drugstores

## CRACKED CUTICLES

Your cuticles seal the nail bed to keep harmful bacteria out of your body. Painful, cracked cuticles can be caused by picking or biting as well as all the factors that can contribute to dry, chafed skin on your hands.

**THE FIX** Slather on a nourishing oil.

"It's best to gently push back the cuticle,



keep it hydrated with an oil, and buff away any rough spots, versus cutting the cuticle," Dr. Klein says. "When we cut the cuticle, we compromise the barrier and open it up to infections around the nail." Apply cuticle oil daily, and look for one that contains nourishing ingredients like jojoba and vitamin E.

**PREVENTION PICK:** CND SolarOil Nail & Cuticle Care, \$13, drugstores



## NAILS THAT WON'T GROW

Eating plenty of healthy fats (like those in salmon and avocado), getting a diverse range of nutrients from fruits and veggies, and avoiding excess sugar will help you grow longer and stronger nails, Dr. Klein says. A lack of iron has also been linked to issues that prevent growth, but only your doctor can determine that with a proper blood test.

**THE FIX** Take a look at your diet.

Tons of pills promise healthier nails, and they likely have a key ingredient on the label: biotin. This B vitamin used to be recommended frequently, "but unless you're biotin deficient, it's not going to do much for you," Dr. Farber says. Instead, work with your doctor to identify an underlying deficiency, then adjust your needs from there. If you decide to go with a supplement, your doctor will be able to figure out the proper dosage.

