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## More Skin Infections Linked To Pedicures Reported In SJ

POSTED: 8:50 pm PST December 2, 2004

**SAN JOSE, Calif.** -- The number of women believed to have developed serious skin infections after receiving pedicures in San Jose has risen today, and there are new ideas about how bacteria is spreading despite attempts by many nail salon owners at following state cleanliness guidelines.

Santa Clara County Public Health Department spokeswoman Joy Alexiou said there are now 40 cases being investigated, a jump of ten cases reported in one day.

Health officials began receiving reports from local doctors as early as May regarding an influx of patients with boils and skin ulcers on their feet and lower legs.

It was determined that the women received pedicures prior to the infections, which likely stemmed from using a whirlpool foot bath, which are notorious breeding grounds for bacteria.

"We assume that things will continue for some time," Alexiou said. "There have been 13 calls from different doctors."

Alexiou said the three most mentioned salons are Silver Nails II at 1080 Blossom Hill Road, Nails National at 5589 Snell Ave., and Kathy Nails at 5353 Almaden Expressway.

The infection stems from the spread of nontuberculous mycobacterium, a microbe that causes painful open sores that have forced some women in years past to undergo reconstructive surgery to hide the scars.

In 2001, the state cosmetology board adopted new regulations to ensure that foot spa equipment is properly maintained.

Between each customer, the water from the foot spa must be drained and cleaned with approved disinfectant as well as soap, according to state cosmetology board spokeswoman Patti Roberts.

Roberts said at the end of each day the foot spa screen, along with any debris, must be removed before cleaning the basin with soap

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and water.

Every other week, the basin must be cleaned and soaked with a bleach solution for at least six hours.

Kathy Nguyen, owner of Kathy Nails, said she followed the state guidelines but still isn't sure why the infections developed.

"We sanitize and disinfect the foot baths just like we were instructed," Nguyen said on Wednesday. "I just don't know what happened."

Deedee Carlson, president of the San Francisco Institute of Aesthetics and Cosmetology, said bacteria could hide in the foot spa's jets.

Even if properly scrubbed out, once the spa is turned back on the bacteria will be re-introduced into the water.

To ensure no bacteria is trapped in the jets, each foot spa should be run for 10 minutes while being soaked in approved disinfectant, eliminating the hiding bacteria.

Carlson said many operators believe it's adequate to just scrub the spas, but more preventive maintenance is required.

"It's like a mini hot tub," Carlson said. "Bacteria like dark, dirty, damp and warm places. The jets are a perfect environment."

According to Carlson, the reports in San Jose have set off a frenzy of calls from various establishments who are concerned over the spread of bacteria.

Some San Francisco shops have requested secret shoppers to inspect their stores, while others are seeking advice on maintaining proper spa hygiene.

A full investigation by state health officials is pending, and could result in the revocation of some establishment licenses.

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