

# Ultimate Chicago Nail Salon Safety & Comfort Checklist (2026 Edition)

#	Check Item	What to Look For / Ask	✓ (Yes/OK)	⚠ (No/Concern)	Notes / What to Do If No
<b>Before Your Visit (Preparation)</b>					
1	Researched the salon online	Check Illinois state license, recent 2025–2026 reviews, interior photos for cleanliness			Too many dirt/complaints → choose another
2	Booked a morning slot (before noon)	Fresh equipment cycles, calmer atmosphere, fewer clients			Evening only → be extra vigilant on hygiene
3	Prepared personal kit	File, buffer, orangewood stick, cuticle oil (reduces cross-contamination risk)			Buy affordable set at pharmacy/Amazon
4	Applied broad-spectrum SPF 30 to hands (for gel/UV services)	10 minutes before lamp exposure; or bring fingerless UV gloves			Essential to minimize UV damage per dermatologist guidelines
<b>Upon Arrival / Salon Inspection</b>					

5	Licenses and full price menu visible at entrance	Must be displayed prominently (Illinois requirement)			Missing → major red flag, leave politely
6	Local exhaust ventilation at workstations (downdraft/capture system)	Air pulled down/away at table level, not just ceiling fan; low chemical odor			Strong fumes → poor ventilation (NIOSH/CDC priority)
7	Overall salon smell fresh or mildly chemical?	No overpowering/eye-watering odors			Stuffy/strong smell → leave and find better-ventilated spot
<b>During the Service (Manicure / Pedicure)</b>					
8	Technician washed hands before gloving (visible to you)	Clear handwashing in front of you			Not visible → politely request or exit
9	Metal tools unwrapped/opened at your station (from autoclave/sterile pouch)	Not pre-opened in jars			Already open → refuse service
10	New disposable liner placed in footbath before your soak	Fresh plastic liner every client (CDC/OSHA standard)			Reused liner → high infection risk, decline
11	No shared jars for dip powder (pour-over or single-use only)	Powder poured into separate container for you			Shared jar → contamination risk, ask to switch or leave

12	Cuticle care: gentle pushback only, no cutting/nipping	No aggressive cutting			Cutting → infection risk, request change
13	No razor or heavy grater on calluses (gentle exfoliation only)	Measured, safe methods			Razor use → cut/infection risk, decline
14	Thin gel coats + proper lamp timing	Even, thin layers; full cure time observed			Thick/rushed → lifting/chips fast, note for next time
<b>After the Service / Aftercare</b>					
15	Received aftercare instructions	Reminded about nightly cuticle oil, gloves for chores, timely fills			None given → ask technician directly
16	Clear removal policy (if removing old gel)	Acetone wrap + controlled filing, no harsh scraping			Aggressive removal → nail damage risk
17	Overall comfort: no pain, redness, lingering irritation	Nails/skin feel healthy post-service			Pain/redness → possible issue, monitor & see dermatologist if persists

**How to Use This Checklist:**

- Print it or save to your phone notes for every visit.
- Complete the first 7 items in under 2 minutes upon arrival — if you have **2 or more** ⚠️, politely leave and choose another salon.
- Mark the rest mentally or with quick notes during/after the service.
- Final score: **14+** ✅ = excellent salon — add to favorites and repeat!
- Pro tip: Share your score/review (anonymously if needed) to help others in Chicago.