

# 3

# Your Professional Image

## Chapter Outline

- Why Study the Importance of Your Professional Image?
- Beauty and Wellness
- Appearance Counts
- Your Physical Presentation



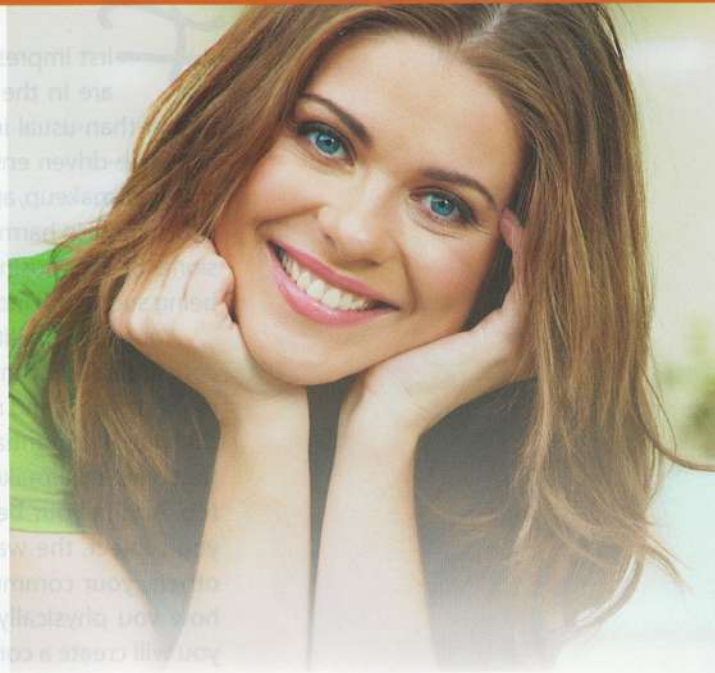
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# Learning Objectives

After completing this chapter, you will be able to:

- ✓ **L01** Discuss the importance of personal hygiene.
- ✓ **L02** Explain the concept of dressing for success.
- ✓ **L03** Discuss ergonomic principles and demonstrate ergonomically correct postures and movements.



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## Key Terms

Page number indicates where in the chapter the term is used.

**ergonomics** / 37

**personal hygiene** / 33

**physical presentation** / 36

**professional image** / 34



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**F**irst impressions are important in any situation. However, because you are in the image business, how you look and present yourself has a bigger-than-usual impact on your future success. Because you will be working in a style-driven environment, you need to look stylish: this includes your nails, clothing, makeup, and hair. When your appearance and the way that you conduct yourself are in harmony with the professional beauty business, your chances of being successful increase dramatically!

Your personality and abilities of course also come into play, but how you look is the first and most important clue that leads potential clients to decide that you can make them look great, too. Add in your behavior, the attitude you project, the way you interact with others, your communication skills, and how you physically hold yourself, and you will create a complete, professional image (**Figure 3-1**).



▲ **Figure 3-1** Project a professional image.

## WHY STUDY THE IMPORTANCE OF YOUR PROFESSIONAL IMAGE?

Nail technicians should have a thorough understanding of the importance of their professional image because:

- ▶ Clients rely on beauty professionals to look good, well cared for, and in step with current styles and fashions. They are more likely to entrust their appearance to a beauty professional who has a positive professional image.
- ▶ Finding a salon that mirrors your professional image and behavior is crucial to your flourishing in your career.
- ▶ Behaving professionally includes having a genuine interest in your own day-to-day activities, being concerned about others, and knowing how to appropriately interact with managers, coworkers, and clients.



## ■ BEAUTY AND WELLNESS

Being well groomed begins with looking and smelling fresh. This is especially important in the beauty business, where practitioners are frequently only inches away from their clients during services.

### Personal Hygiene

It is a given that you should shower or bathe every day, apply deodorant, and keep a neat, clean appearance. Beyond these basic hygiene habits, there are special considerations when working in a salon.

One weak moment of drinking coffee right before performing a service, or wearing something that needs laundering because you did not plan ahead, could spell disaster. Rather than telling you that you smell offensive, most clients will simply not return for another service. Equally distressing, they will typically tell their friends about the bad experience they had while sitting at your station or even post about your odor problem online!

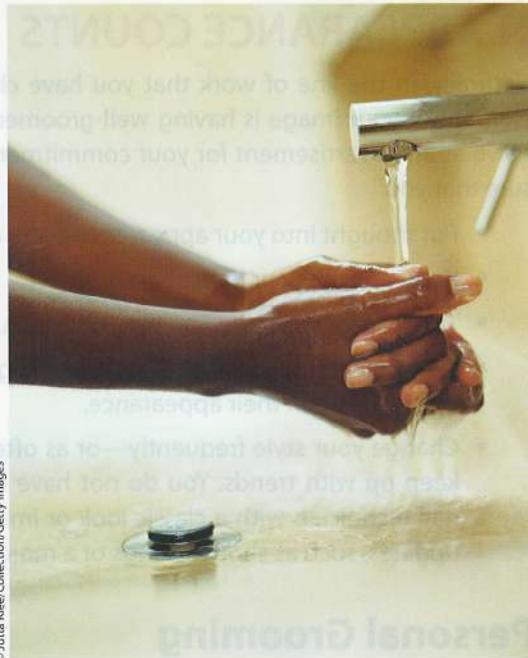
**Personal hygiene** is the daily maintenance of cleanliness achieved through healthful habits (Figure 3–2). Working as a nail technician, where you are often just inches away from clients, means that you must be extremely meticulous about your hygiene.

One of the best ways to ensure that you always smell fresh and clean is to create a hygiene pack to use at work. This pack should include the following items:

- Toothbrush and toothpaste
- Mouthwash
- Sanitizing hand wipes or liquid to clean your hands between clients (when soap and water are not available)
- Dental floss
- Deodorant or antiperspirant

Your hygiene pack helps you maintain the following good personal hygiene habits:

- Wash your hands throughout the day as required, including at the beginning of each service.
- Use deodorant or antiperspirant.
- Brush and floss your teeth and use mouthwash or breath mints throughout the day as needed.



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Figure 3–2 Practice meticulous personal hygiene every day.





- Do self-checks periodically to ensure that you smell and look fresh.
- If you smoke cigarettes, *do not* smoke during work hours. Many clients find the lingering smell offensive. If you smoke during your lunch break, brush your teeth, use mouthwash, and wash your hands afterward! **LO1**

## CAUTION:

### Perfume

Because a significant number of people are sensitive or allergic to a variety of chemicals, including perfume oils, many salons have a no-fragrance policy for staff members during work hours.

## APPEARANCE COUNTS

Naturally, in the line of work that you have chosen, an extremely important element of your image is having well-groomed hair, skin, and nails. They will serve as an advertisement for your commitment to professional beauty. Make sure that you:

- Put thought into your appearance every day.
- Keep up with your haircut and color.
- Take care of your skin and use sunscreen.
- Determine the best length and grooming style for your nails and meticulously maintain their appearance.
- Change your style frequently—or as often as you feel comfortable—to keep up with trends. You do not have to be super trendy, but even a nail technician with a classic look or image should get subtle, seasonal updates, such as shorter bangs or a more vibrant hair color.

## Personal Grooming

Many salon owners and managers consider appearance, personality, and poise just as important as technical knowledge and skills. One of the most vital aspects of good personal grooming is the careful maintenance of your wardrobe. First and foremost, your clothes must be clean—not simply free of visible dirt, but stain free, a feat that is sometimes difficult to achieve in a salon environment. Because you are constantly coming into contact with products and chemicals that can instantly damage fabrics, it is a good idea to invest in an apron or smock to wear while handling such products. Be mindful about spills and drips when using chemicals and avoid leaning on counters in the work area—particularly in the dispensary.

### Dress for Success

What you wear outside of work is your choice. However, while you're at work, your wardrobe selection should express a professional image that is consistent with the image of the salon (**Figure 3-3**). Your **professional image** is the impression you project through both your outward appearance and your conduct in the workplace. Commonsense should rule when it comes to choosing clothes to wear at work. When shopping for work clothes, you should always visualize how you would look in them while performing professional client services. Is that image acceptable to your clients?

To some degree, your clothing should reflect the fashions of the season. Depending on where you work, you may be

▼ **Figure 3-3** Be guided by your salon's dress code.



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encouraged to wear stylish torn jeans and faded tees, or they may be expressly forbidden. Just remember, the best way to ensure that you are dressed for success is to “tune in” to your salon’s culture and clientele, so that you can make the best clothing choices.

While you should always follow your salon’s dress code, here are guidelines to help you achieve a look that is appropriate almost anywhere:

- Wear clothing that is clean, fresh, and in step with fashion.
- Choose clothing that is functional and comfortable—as well as stylish.
- Accessorize your outfits, but make sure that your jewelry does not clank and jingle while working. This can be irritating to fellow professionals and drive clients to distraction.
- Wear shoes that are comfortable, have a low heel, and offer good support. Ill-fitting shoes and high heels are not the best choices to wear when performing pedicures and portable services within the salon.

### **Wearing Makeup in the Salon**

Makeup is an exciting category for beauty professionals. It helps to promote your professional image and represents profitable sales for salons. You should always use makeup to accentuate your best features. With that said, it is vital to wear makeup at work. A freshly scrubbed face may look great for a leisurely day at the beach, but it does nothing to promote your image as a beauty professional. Unless you are working in a trendy urban salon, things like heavily blackened eyes are generally best left for after work. As with clothing, let the salon’s image be your guide in makeup application (**Figure 3–4**).

### **Maintaining Perfect Hands and Nails**

Even though you will be very busy taking care of salon clients, you must make your own hand-and-foot care your first priority. Your hands and feet must be meticulously groomed at all times, including having well-cared-for skin and



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◀ **Figure 3–4** Expertly applied makeup is part of having a professional image.





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▲ **Figure 3-5** Having impeccably maintained nails will give prospective clients a compelling reason to try your services.

nails. Wearing freshly applied fingernail polish is also essential to creating a positive professional image (**Figure 3-5**)! Wearing polish at work was once nearly considered impossible due to the constant contact with polish remover. Today, the latest gel polishes and colored artificial enhancements—which cannot be removed with nonacetone remover—have resolved this issue. **LO2**

## Behaving Professionally

Beyond hygiene, grooming, and clothing, a professional image and appearance are affected by your behavior, etiquette, and interactions with others. Keeping a positive attitude at work helps you behave appropriately and project a positive image. Ask yourself how employees would appear to you if they were rude to customers, screamed at colleagues, or crudely asked, “Yeah?” to find out what a customer wanted.

Politeness is the hallmark of professionalism; this includes your treatment of your coworkers. Being rude to other nail technicians, hairstylists, or support staff not only creates a negative work environment but will also cause you to lose many important opportunities. Being rude to coworkers makes them lose respect for you, diminishes the number of referrals they are willing to give you, and prevents you from gaining valuable advice that senior service providers would otherwise be more than happy to share.

Specific communication skills will be discussed in Chapter 4, “Communicating for Success.” For now, keep in mind that all on-the-job behavior is part of your professional image.

## ■ YOUR PHYSICAL PRESENTATION

Having good posture and following ergonomic practices will make you look and feel better while caring for clients. Being consistent with this will also help you to have a long-lasting and pain-free career.

### Posture

Good physical posture, an even gait, and careful movements are very important parts of your **physical presentation**. They show off your figure to its best advantage and convey an image of confidence. From a health standpoint, good posture and healthy movements can also prevent fatigue and many other physical problems. When you work within the field of nail technology, sitting improperly can put a great deal of stress on your neck, shoulders, back, and legs. Stress on the body can result in strain and/or injury. Good posture, on the other hand, allows you to get through your day feeling strong and doing your best work (**Figure 3-6**).



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▲ **Figure 3-6** Good physical presentation is important.



Some guidelines for achieving and maintaining good work posture include:

- Keep the neck elongated and balanced directly above the shoulders.
- Lift your upper body so that your chest is out and up (do not slouch).
- Hold your shoulders level and relaxed, not scrunched up.
- Sit with your back straight.
- Pull in your abdomen so that it is flat.

## Ergonomics and Your Body

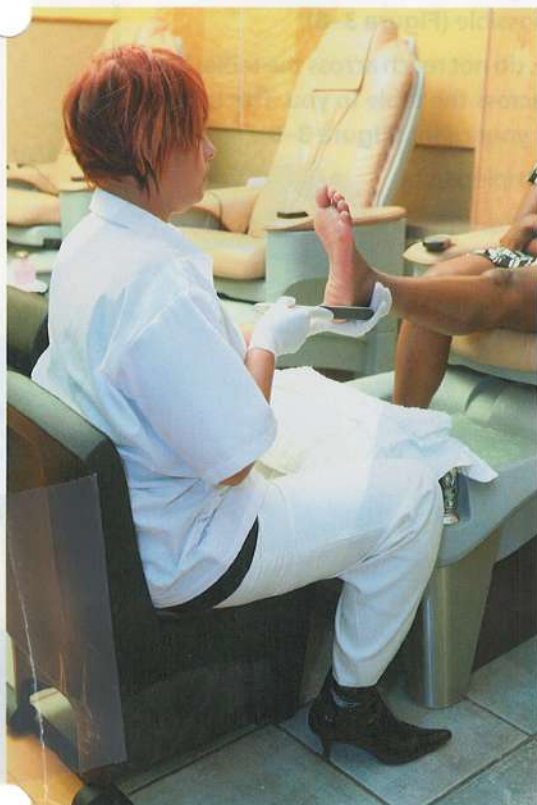
Each year, thousands of beauty professionals report musculoskeletal disorders caused by repetitive motions and stressful body positions. Busy nail technicians who sit all day and hold their bodies in unnatural positions for long periods of time are susceptible to problems of the hands, wrists, shoulders, neck, back, and legs. If not attended to, these problems can become career-threatening.

Prevention is the key to alleviating these problems. An awareness of your body posture and movements, coupled with better work habits and proper tools and equipment, will enhance your health and comfort. An understanding of ergonomics is useful as well. **Ergonomics** is the study of how a workplace and its tools should be designed for maximum comfort, safety, efficiency, and productivity.

It attempts to fit the job to the person, rather than the other way around. Examples include a nail technician's stool that can be raised or lowered to accommodate different heights and nippers and clippers that are designed to avoid putting stress on the wrists or finger joints.

Stressful repetitive motions have a cumulative effect on the muscles and joints. Monitor yourself as you work to see if you are:

- Gripping or squeezing implements too tightly.
- Bending the wrist up or down constantly when using the tools of your profession.
- Holding your arms away from your body as you work.
- Holding your elbows more than a 60-degree angle away from your body for extended periods of time (**Figure 3-7**).
- Bending forward and/or twisting your body to get closer to your client.



▲ **Figure 3-7** Be careful not to extend your elbows more than a 60-degree angle away from your body for long periods of time.

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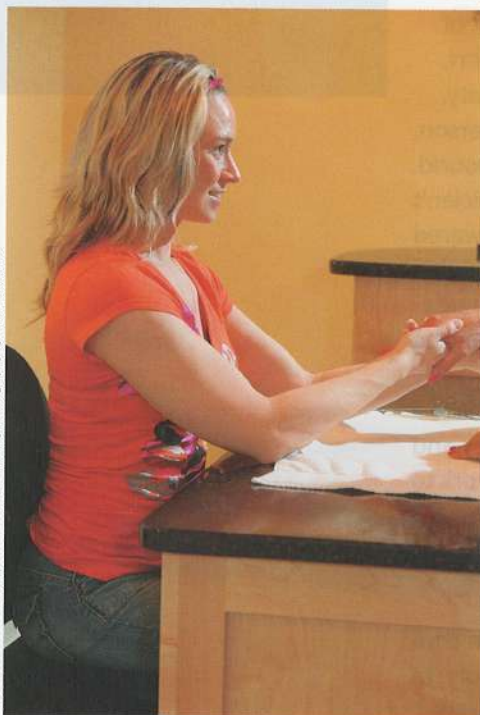


► **Figure 3–8** Be sure to rest your wrists in a straight or neutral position as much as possible.

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▼ **Figure 3–9** Follow proper ergonomic techniques when performing nail services in order to protect yourself and your client.



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Try the following measures to avoid some of the problems previously discussed:

- Rest your wrists while working and keep them in a straight or neutral position as much as possible (**Figure 3–8**).
- When performing a manicure, do not reach across the table; have the client extend her hands across the table to you. This is ergonomically correct for you and your client (**Figure 3–9**).
- Use ergonomically designed implements.
- Keep your back and neck straight.
- Break up repetitiveness of the motions you use by including regular stretching exercises in your daily routine.

In every aspect of your work, always put your health first and then the task at hand. It will serve you well in the beauty business and ensure a long, injury-free career. **LO3**

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## ■ Review Questions

1. List four basic habits of personal hygiene.
2. Define the term *professional image*.
3. List the elements of professional image.
4. List the general guidelines of dressing for success.
5. Identify what is included in a hygiene pack.
6. How often should you freshen up throughout the day?
7. What is the role of posture in good health?
8. Assess your own work posture. How can it be improved?
9. Define the term *ergonomics*.
10. Give examples of ergonomically beneficial equipment.

## Chapter Outline

- Why study ergonomics?
- Human factors
- Workplace hazards
- The role of ergonomics
- Workplace safety
- Workplace ergonomics
- Workplace ergonomics