



A nail specialist, Dr. Stern is consulted by other dermatologists, physicians, and patients who have read about her or been referred by their nail salon.



As the mother of three boys, Dr. Stern tries to strike a balance between work, family, and personal time.



Read previous "Day in the Life" articles by Dr. Stern at www.nailsmag.com/danastern.



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A Day in the Life of a Nail Expert

In this month's column, Dr. Stern talks about her life as a nail specialist, product inventor, lecturer, and mother of three.

Editor's note: Since 2011, board-certified dermatologist Dana Stern has been educating NAILS' readers on a broad range of nail diseases, disorders, and treatments. We thought we'd take some time this month to learn more about her background, her passion for nails, and the development of her eponymous product line.

Tell us about yourself. How is it you became a nail specialist?

Dr. Stern: I am a board-certified dermatologist and I practice on New York City's Fifth Avenue and in the Hamptons. I'm also a wife and mother to three boys and a dog named Bo. When I was doing clinical research at the Mount Sinai School of Medicine prior to my dermatology residency, my chairman suggested that I apply for a research grant for an organization called the Council for Nail Disorders. I received the grant and ended up publishing a ground-breaking study on brittle nails where we made several new discoveries. From then on I was hooked on nails.

Why do you think there are so few dermatologists who specialize in nails?

Dr. Stern: Dermatologists are trained to treat skin, hair, and nails, but nails is a small niche area within dermatology and there are no formalized fellowship training programs for nails, so learning about nails in depth really only occurs if you are interested and very self-motivated. For example, when I was a resident at Mount Sinai School of Medicine, I spent time in Portland, Ore., learning from a well-known dermatologist nail specialist. Nail research and lecturing was also something that I did a lot of early on.

Speaking of lecturing, what sort of audiences do you lecture to when you're not busy seeing patients or doing nail surgeries?

Dr. Stern: I usually speak at the larger dermatology conferences, hospitals, nail trade shows, and every year I give a nail lecture to a podiatry college. It's wonderful to be able to share knowledge with other physicians, dermatologists, podiatrists, and nail care professionals.

What kinds of nail conditions do you typically treat?

Dr. Stern: At cocktail parties when people hear that I am a nail specialist they often look at me with confusion and ask what it means to specialize in nails. There are so many nail issues from benign nail tumors and cancers, such as melanoma or squamous cell carcinoma, to bacterial and fungal infections, trauma, salon-related issues, product allergies, medication side effects, inflammatory diseases of the nail, and habit-related nail issues.



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You created the first dermatologist-developed nail line and launched the Dr. Dana brand on QVC in 2016. Tell us about this journey and why you ventured into the product business.

Dr. Stern: The line began many years ago when I began to observe how common nail issues like peeling, weak, brittle nails were impossible to treat. The products on the market were not only ineffective, the ingredients were often toxic and had no scientific validity. I knew there had to be a better way and I was frustrated that I didn't have better choices to offer my patients. And so I began developing products.

Eventually I discovered that working out of a home office with no revenue stream was decidedly not ideal, and I found a partner with product and retail experience to work with and we launched Dr. Dana on QVC with what became our primary product, the Dr. Dana Nail Renewal System. The system was a best seller from the get go and we were able to launch several other successful nail products following that.

Your product line was acquired by Nu Skin recently, yet you are still heavily involved with product education, marketing, and development. Tell us about this partnership.

Dr. Stern: Working with Nu Skin has been a dream partnership for the Dr. Dana brand. Nu Skin is a direct



Dr. Stern created her nail line to offer patients and consumers an effective treatment for issues like peeling, weak, and brittle nails.

sales company with the highest standards when it comes to product quality, ingredients, and science-based formulations, so it was a natural fit for my brand and a wonderful way to grow the Dr. Dana line globally. It was always a dream for me to be able to help people with nail issues on a broad scale and it's also wonderful to empower people to be able to support themselves independently. Nu Skin aids in this by providing their distributors with the tools that they need in order to become independent entrepreneurs.

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Many nail techs are also working parents. How do you juggle business, your practice, and three boys?

Dr. Stern: Great question! We are all busier than ever it seems, and yes, everything is a balance. Learning to say no is an important skill and one that I have struggled with, but learned over years. We need to remember to make ourselves a priority. A couple of years ago I took a transcendental meditation (TM) course through The David Lynch Foundation and it has helped me to strike a balance while enabling me to enjoy life along the way. It's easy for us goal-oriented folks to always feel like we are not achieving or accomplishing enough and it is so easy to get stressed out. TM has helped me to have more balls in the air and to harness more creativity with less effort and stress.

Feeling grateful for what I have is also something I really try to focus on when things are feeling out of control. Being organized but laid back at the same time is a crucial thing. If you were to look behind the scenes, things are often chaotic and messy in my life, but it's important not to try to control everything and to be perfect all the time. Social media paints a perfect portrait and this can create stress. Take breaks from screens, technology, and social media and try to be more in the moment.

How can nail techs incorporate Dr. Dana products into their business?

Dr. Stern: The Dr. Dana Nail Renewal System is already being sold by nail professionals across the country. It's a unique all-natural, three-step nail treatment that will transform fingernails and toenails in just 10 minutes and it only needs to be used once a week. Brittle, damaged, and dull nails will finish healthy, lustrous, and shiny, like a clear coat, and yet it does not require dry time or removal.

In the salon, it can be a great offering for toenails for manicure clients. Many clients may not feel like waiting for toenail polish to dry, especially during colder months, so you can offer a toenail treatment while they are getting their fingernails done. Clients can keep the three-step system after the service and continue to use it weekly for three months. Alternatively, the system is an incredible "post gel rescue" for those who may have significant damage from improper gel removal.

The system can also be sold outside salons by nail professionals to their networks. Social selling is becoming a wonderful way for nail technicians to supplement their salon incomes. As a nail tech, your peers and networks view you as a nail expert and rightly so — you have an opportunity to monetize these relationships by introducing them to a physician-formulated nail treatment. **N**

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