



A hand is shown on the left side of the frame, holding a black and silver nail file. The background is a vibrant blue with numerous shards of broken glass scattered across it. A large white circle is centered in the background, containing the main text. The text 'strength' and 'your' are in a bold, yellow, sans-serif font, while 'train' and 'tips' are in a larger, bold, black, sans-serif font. The words are arranged in a staggered, overlapping manner.

strength train your tips

Like Lizzo, you do your hair toss, check your nails...wait. Do you really check your nails? We don't mean admiring your nail art but rather examining your naked nails. Weekly salon appointments make it all too easy to camouflage and ignore the damage you might've racked up from boxing, lifting, bouldering, and just living that active life. But it's crucial to pay attention to any shifts in shape, texture, or color: Nails are a barometer of what's going on internally, and changes can signal deeper health concerns. Ahead, we've got solutions for common problems so you can score good-as-hell nails.

By Kristina
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Nails need recovery too.
Don't worry, they'll
come back stronger.



You Banged Them Up at the Gym

If you scratched your nails during CrossFit or rock climbing, you might have tiny white scuff-like marks that won't budge. They're technically called punctate leukonychia, says Dana Stern, MD, a New York City-based dermatologist specializing in nails. They usually result from trauma to the nail (say, when you grab a barbell the wrong way), but if you're pretty sure you haven't been knocking your hands around lately, know that in rare cases they can also signal conditions like Crohn's or kidney disease. See a doc if you have other symptoms.

THE FIX ▶ Try an at-home kit that targets damage, like Zoya's Naked Manicure Gelie-Cure System (\$65, gelie-cure.com). It's like personal training for your nails. The set contains a fast-absorbing, glycerin-powered serum that increases moisture in your cuticles and nail beds, along with a clear demi-gel polish that comes off with a gentle remover in just two minutes—no soaking or scraping required. Over time, your nails will grow as strong as the quads you're sculpting at the squat rack.





You Are Lacking Nutrients

If your nails are thin and curving inward, like a spoon, it likely means one thing: iron deficiency. Formally called koilonychia, its other causes include aging, blood loss (such as from ulcers or heavy menstruation), pregnancy, and a crappy diet. (Surprise! Your nails need nutrients like the rest of your body.) To start, you'd be wise to take a closer look at your iron intake. "Meat, eggs, and leafy green vegetables are all important sources," Dr. Stern says.

THE FIX ▶ In addition to upping your iron and eating fewer processed foods, talk to your doctor about taking a supplement. Thorne Ferrasorb Capsules (\$21, amazon.com) contain 36 milligrams of iron each. Another winning diet booster? Biotin. "Daily biotin—around two to three milligrams—may help support nail growth and strength," Dr. Stern says. But be patient: "Fingernails grow out every four to six months, so you need to take biotin for at least that long to see results." Try packets of Four Sigmatic's Superfood Beauty Mix (\$30, foursigmatic.com).



You Live in a Cold Climate

As you sink deeper into winter, you might notice your nails suffering as much as your skin. "Cold weather is a major trigger for brittle nails," says Dr. Stern, explaining that a combination of lower humidity outside and drier air inside (thanks to heating) sucks moisture from your hands. Lines around the cuticles, flaking, and peeling are all expected in freezing temperatures—and covering that up with some glitter polish for the holidays won't make it go away, sorry.

THE FIX ▶ Exfoliate and moisturize your nails like you do your skin. The Dr. Dana Nail Renewal System (\$60, amazon.com) can help: It has a chemical exfoliant (glycolic acid), a physical exfoliant (via a fine nail-buffer file), and a coconut oil hydrator. "Glycolic acid works similarly for the nails and the skin, removing surface damage," Dr. Stern says. Same goes for coconut oil, which helps replace some of that lost moisture.

81%

OF WOMEN'S HEALTH READERS ADMIT THEY PEEL OFF THEIR GEL MANICURES.



You Never Skip Your #MondayMani

Gels are addictive for being low-maintenance and chip-resistant, and for lasting two weeks or longer. But back-to-back appointments are a recipe for damage: The 10-minute-long acetone soak required for removal is dehydrating, plus gels can lead to splitting, thinning, and white patches called keratin granulations (they form when surface nail cells lift off during the gel removal process—more so if improperly peeled away DIY). "Overprocessed nails break easily," says Dr. Stern.

THE FIX ▶ It's in your best interest to take two- to four-week breaks between polish appointments—especially considering conventional formulas can contain dibutyl phthalate (DBP), a known endocrine disruptor; toluene, which may lead to nervous system disorders; and formaldehyde. "Formaldehyde is a suspected carcinogen, and while it can help create a harder nail plate, it also lowers nail flexibility and increases brittleness over time," Dr. Stern says. While going naked, reinforce the health of your beds with a cuticle serum like Olive & June's (\$16, oliveandjune.com). The felt tip makes it easy to dispense a nongreasy amount.



4 Bad Nail Habits to Break

1

Using Your Nails as Tools

Even tough nails require some extra care. Avoid using them to open boxes and canned drinks, and instead recruit a box cutter or letter opener to do the job. Yeah, what breakage?

2

Picking Your Cuticles

"The cuticle is the nail's natural protective seal and the key to overall nail health," Dr. Stern says. Remove it and you put the nail at risk for infection. "Gently push it back with a washcloth after a warm shower."

3

Biting When You're Nervous

You know it's a bad habit, but here's another reason: Biting "stimulates pigment-producing cells," Dr. Stern says. It creates a striped effect—not the kind of nail art you're going for.

4

Washing Dishes With Bare Hands

Wear gloves to protect your digits from the harsh ingredients in your dish soap. While you're at it, you'll also spare your hands the cracking that comes along with super-dry skin.