

Shoel U'Mashiv

Gel Nails at the Mikvah

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Q - A woman who was thinking both about the next manicure she wanted to get, as well as her forthcoming trip to the *Mikvah*, asked me if she was able to get gel nails before she went?

A - What is the *Halacha* about wearing nail polish at the *Mikvah*?

The *Gemara Bava Kamma* 82a says that *Chatzitzos* have 2 defining features, both of which are a *Halacha L'Moshe M'Sinai*. They are that they cover the majority of one's body and they are something a person cares to remove. The *Rema Y.D.* 198:1 says a woman should not go to the *Mikvah* with something that covers the minority of her body, even if she doesn't want it removed, so that people do not get confused. Generally, we advise women to remove nail polish for this reason. A further reason is because it might have chipped without her noticing, making it a *Chatzitzah*. Nail polish itself is not automatically a *Chatzitzah*. The *Shemiras Shabbos K'Hilchasa* 16:66 talks about a woman who is going to the *Mikvah* on Friday night and forgot to remove her nail polish. He says if her nails are painted well in a way that she would be comfortable presenting herself in public, then she should go to the *Mikvah* with the polish on. If they are chipping, then she should have a non-Jew remove them.

What are gel nails?

A gel manicure uses gel-based polish and requires a UV light to cure the polish. It is a fairly new invention and has gained a lot of traction because of its durability. The average manicure is only expected to last a few days before it chips, while gel is generally expected to last around 3 weeks without chipping.

Can she get gel nails before the *Mikvah*?

I told her my recommendation was to not get the gel nails before going to the *Mikvah*. In general, we follow the *Rema* who says a woman should not go to the *Mikvah* with something that covers the minority of her body, even if she doesn't want it removed, so that people do not get confused. Also, if a woman decides that she no longer wants the gel nails, then they become a *Chatzitzah*, even if they aren't chipped.