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Nails a mess? Here's help

JAIME BEDRIN Product Perfect

When my editor sent me an e-mail asking if I wanted to try out a new, relatively inexpensive nail enhancement process, I was floored.

I have rotten fingernails. I have gorgeous hair. But I have brittle nails.

They do splits even Mary Lou Retton couldn't imagine.

My nails don't grow long. They grow wide. I've tried popping vitamins, getting regular manicures and keeping clear polish on my nails. But when you inherit weak nails (thanks, Mom), there isn't much you can do.

I think I've finally found a solution for my weak nails and, in spite of the name of the process, it has nothing to do with medicine.

Remember Lee Press-On Nails? As a kid, I'd sit at our kitchen table struggling to put them on as they popped off. Boy, did they look ridiculous on my small hands. Now there's a more natural-looking nail. Prescription Nails are plastic overlays designed to match the width and curvature of the natural nail. No acrylics. No gels. No wraps. A New Zealand company makes them. They come in 128 sizes.

Here's how it works: A manicurist measures your nails, then selects corresponding overlays that match your "prescription."

After prepping nails by trimming cuticles and buffing nails to remove surface shine, the nail technician preps your nails with a Ph-balancing solution. Next, a product that allows the glue to set quickly is applied to the nail. Then the nail enhancements are treated with glue. After the overlays are applied, it's time to trim, file and polish.

The longest part of the entire process was the nail fitting, and you have to do that only once.

The salon records your exact nail sizes for future manicures. In two weeks you return to the salon, soak your nails, and a new set of Prescription Nails is applied.

There is no filling of the nail with Prescription Nails. Break a nail? No problem. Simply replace the overlay.



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I tested my Prescription Nails for five days. The instructions say one set should last two weeks. But some people in the salon where I had my nails done were already on their third week (same set) and their nail looked great. (They did do a polish change.)

Prescription Nails are comfortable and very strong. I kept thinking they would pop off every time I ripped a package from Fed Ex. It never happened.

The polish held up and I couldn't believe how quickly the overlays dried. I did get one tiny chip, but it was almost impossible to see. At the office, my friends said my manicure looked natural. I agreed.

I did end up trimming my nails at home, twice, using a nail clipper and emery board, mostly because I'm used to short nails and needed to adjust to the length. But in general, there's very little maintenance.

At night, I dabbed on cuticle oil and hand cream. Not much else to do.

All in all, I was very pleased with the results. Prescription Nails are a great option for anyone who wants nails for a special occasion, say the prom or a wedding, but doesn't want the commitment of acrylics or not to mention the price tag.

They're also good for nail-biters. I found it hard to bite my nails, as they were hard and I didn't feel like a plastic.

Now that my Prescription Nails are off, I miss the clickety-click sound they used to make when I rapped against my desk or kitchen counter.

I'm thrilled that my own nails haven't been damaged – in fact, they even look a little bit longer than they before, probably because they've been protected from my teeth and other hazards. I'm definitely considering going back for a second set.

A full set is \$30, and subsequent sets are \$25. (French manicures are an extra \$5.)

GET PRESCRIPTION NAILS

Beauty Brands Salon Spa Superstore

- Promenade on Providence Shopping Center, 5335 Ballantyne Commons Parkway, (704) 845-3001.
- Birkdale Village shopping center, 8830 Lindholm Drive, Huntersville, (704) 655-2112.



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