



Whirlpool Footspa Safety

In October 2000, county health officials in California received complaints about a large outbreak of skin boils from customers who soaked their feet in footspas as part of their pedicure services. It was determined that the boils were caused by contaminated whirlpool footspas that had not been properly cleaned.

Q What do skin boils (mycobacterium fortuitum) look like?

A Skin boils usually start out looking like spider bites that grow in size and later produce pus. Boils sometimes become open wounds and may leave scars.

Q How can I protect myself from getting a skin infection from a contaminated whirlpool footspa?

A To protect yourself from infection:

- Check for a current establishment license to be posted in the reception area of the salon.
- DO NOT shave or wax your legs 24 hours prior to receiving a pedicure.
- DO NOT get a pedicure if you have broken skin or lesions on your legs.
- Consult your doctor before getting a pedicure if you have a weakened immune system (such as diabetes, Lupus, etc.).
- Be sure that only clean, disinfected instruments are used on you.
- DO NOT be afraid to ask the manicurist/cosmetologist how the footspas are cleaned. You have the right to ask to view the footspa cleaning logs to find out when the footspas were last disinfected. Footspas MUST be cleaned after every client.
- Leave the salon if you have any doubts about its cleanliness.

Q What should I do if I have a skin infection that may be from a salon whirlpool footspa?

A See a doctor. Explain that you have had your legs in a whirlpool footspa. Also, contact the Board of Barbering and Cosmetology to report any health problems you believe are the result of a salon visit.

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Q How is this type of skin infection treated?

A This type of infection can be treated with antibiotics. In some cases, boils will heal without treatment.

Q What has the Board of Barbering and Cosmetology done to protect consumers from skin boils?

A In winter 2006, the Board adopted emergency regulations to update the cleaning procedures of footspas and ensure consumer safety. These procedures guide salon staff on how footspas must be cleaned.

