

Richmond Podiatrist Develops Medical Grade Foot & Hand Spa, Raises Standard of Quality in Regional Nail Salon Industry

***Dr. Mitchell Waskin, One of a Few in the Nation to Open Prestigious,
Full-Service, In-House Nail Spa***

Throughout 2007, Dr. Mitchell Waskin, partner and medical director of the Foot & Ankle Center located in Richmond, Va., on the Johnston-Willis Medical Center Campus, noticed an unusual increase in visits from patients who expressed concern about the “sudden” appearance of fungal infections in their feet, skin and toenails. During these visits, Dr. Waskin identified the culprit fairly quickly, as each patient consistently reported that their foot problems became evident shortly after a visit to a pedicure salon.

As a man of action and one who is passionate about foot health, Dr. Waskin was determined to take a closer look at the standards of cleanliness in the local nail spa industry. His goal was to identify the conditions at facilities similar to those that caused the “mini” epidemic that walked into his office during 2007, and determine what if anything could be done to prevent further foot infections.

However, this project was going to present a challenge. Dr. Waskin is a Board Certified foot surgeon with more than 20 years of experience and has a thriving podiatry practice. In addition, he is affiliated with CJW Medical Center and is developing a state-of-the-art foot and ankle clinic on the Johnston-Willis Medical Center campus.

Nevertheless, Dr. Waskin was determined to investigate the sanitary conditions of the nail spa industry in the Richmond area, and in spite of his busy schedule, devised a creative way to conduct “up close and personal” research.

As he tells it, “I took it upon myself to go to a number of high end salons. I bought gift certificates for my wife and while I was there, I requested a tour of each facility. I asked a lot of questions about how they cleaned their instruments and how they operated. Even in the ‘high end’ spas I could plainly see their standards of cleanliness would have been unacceptable in a medical facility requiring sterile instruments.”

Research Creates Groundwork for Innovative Foot & Hand Spa

“For example,” said Dr. Waskin, “there were a lot of salons that considered it acceptable to just spray the whirlpool basin with disinfectant after each client. The problem is that most bacteria and fungus accumulate within the whirlpool’s interior parts, including the tubes and motor. If these parts are not properly disinfected there is an opportunity for residual fungal and bacterial material to circulate into the basin and contaminate yet another customer.”

Dr. Waskin said this unsanitary situation created not only a breeding ground for a variety of transmittable medical conditions including fungal and bacterial infections, but could also harbor more serious bacteria such as staphylococcus, streptococcus and the potentially debilitating mycobacterium fortuitum.

Dr. Waskin was particularly alarmed about the risks such unsanitary pedicure and manicure environments posed for diabetics. “Diabetics have a compromised ability to fight infection. It is critical they make sure they are visiting therapeutic, medical-grade nail spas,” said Dr. Waskin. “If a diabetic contracts a nail infection in a spa, there is a very real possibility that a hangnail, an ingrown toenail or a fungus could become a critical medical issue,” he said.

During his research/visits to the nail spas Dr. Waskin quickly became aware that cleanliness, disinfection and sterilization of equipment were substandard in the facilities he toured. He also conducted a literature search and discovered numerous studies that indicated that proliferation of bacteria was a common problem in nail spas across the country.

The Foot & Hand Spa – Build it and They Will Come

Because of his first hand experience visiting local nail spas and his extensive research that described the abysmal sanitation standards in the industry, Dr. Waskin decided to build one of the best full-service, medical grade, therapeutic nail spas in the region.

Of the approximately 15,000 spas in the nation, fewer than 500 hold the designation as “medical grade” facilities. Medical spas are distinguished by the availability of licensed healthcare professionals, such as physicians or nurses, on site who are consistently involved in client care.

However, of the more than 13,000 Podiatrists nationally, Dr. Mitchell Waskin is one of an elite group of approximately 25 Podiatrists in the country who provide full-service, in-house, highly specialized, medical grade (complete with autoclave sterilization) nail spa services.

Some of the services offered at the Foot & Hand Spa, the only medical grade nail spa in the region, include hospital level (autoclave) sterilization of all instruments, an on-site Podiatrist, licensed pedicurists with extensive, additional in-house clinical training and manicure professionals, all specially trained to recognize possible problem areas and who can request a medical consultation as needed. Pedicure clients also receive a foot and ankle medical assessment performed by the pedicurist, prior to their first pedicure, to determine if the client has any risk factors for getting a pedicure. If the pedicurist has any medical concerns then Dr. Waskin is immediately available for consultation.

In order to maintain high standards of cleanliness, the facility uses only EPA-OSHA approved germicides on the equipment, and an autoclave is used on all reusable equipment. Individually wrapped non-reusable items, such as toe-separators and files, are presented to the client after they have been used. The client may choose to take them home or dispose of them.

Dr. Waskin said the use of the latest technology was key to maintaining completely disinfected equipment. “Our pedicure chairs are constructed using state-of-the-art technology. The whirlpools have filtering systems that prevent bacteria and fungal material from getting trapped within them, and the “pipeless” interiors enable us to run disinfectant through the interior motor parts ensuring a clean environment for each client.”

“Our goal at the Foot & Hand Spa,” said Dr. Waskin, “is to provide our clients with a convenient, safe, sanitary, technologically sophisticated, enjoyable, healthy, foot and hand experience performed by highly trained pedicurists.”

One dedicated Foot & Hand Spa client is former Foot & Ankle Center patient, Barbara Adams, an RN who works at Johnston Willis’ Outpatient Surgery Center. A recent transplant from Florida with more than 30 years of nursing experience, Adams is familiar with feet in need of a pedicure.

According to Adams, her monthly pedicure at the Foot & Hand Spa is a rejuvenating experience. She has none of the sanitation concerns that she used to have at commercial facilities

“I work full-time,” said Adams, “I’m on my feet all day; I’m at the age that I deserve to take care of myself. I thoroughly enjoy my visits to the spa, I’m in a relatively private area, the lighting is low, it’s quiet and the entire place has a sort of Zen-like feel for me. I can just sit back and relax. The medical assessment is a terrific bonus, because if there is a problem, I just have to go down the hallway to have it taken care of. The actual pedicure chair is icing on the cake. It vibrates and soothes those tired muscles of mine. I’ve even teased them about renting the chairs out as stress relievers! I recommend this level of nail spa treatment to everyone I work with.”

Dr. Waskin is confident that the Barbara Adams’ of the world are growing in numbers and choosing medical grade nail spas rather than commercial salons. “As people are becoming more health conscious, they want to approach how

they do things in the healthiest way possible,” said Waskin. “They are more knowledgeable about the fact that most high end salons are not very sanitary. They are looking for a *healthy* alternative such as the Foot & Hand Spa.”

Dr. Waskin said his primary goal is to serve two main groups. “I want to provide a safe, enjoyable experience to anyone who just wants to get a tremendous pedicure at a very high quality facility with a medical grade of cleanliness.” He added, “I also want to serve people who have special issues with their feet and need a professional to consult with them and help them manage their conditions. For example, diabetics and people on chemotherapy need special precautions taken with regard to nail and foot care. Athletes also develop certain conditions that need professional attention. I want to make sure they get customized pedicures and manicures based on their needs.”

The next time you have an hour to spare, are feeling the need for some rest, relaxation and outstanding full-service pampering in a “medical grade” environment, a visit to the Foot & Hand Spa may be one of the nicest things you can do for yourself.

For further information: contact the Foot & Hand Spa, 804-320-FOOT (320-3668) or www.320-FOOT.com.

###