

How to Safely Offer Diabetic Pedicures

by [Nicole Johnson](#) | September 26, 2022 |

Any good nail technician strives to provide the best services for every client. But the reality is that some clients need a little extra time, thought and care, especially those who have certain medical conditions or health sensitivities.

Beauty industry veteran and health-conscious product developer [Joy Johnson](#) knows this all too well. As a specialist in diabetic pedicures, she is an expert in the differing needs of the health-sensitive community, which is extremely important to her. Johnson lost her mother to metastatic breast cancer when she was just 16 years old.



Joy Johnson, 15-year beauty industry veteran and founder of [Joy of Beauty](#) bodycare

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“I have an affinity for that sensitive community because of my experience of seeing my mom deteriorate as the years went on with her sickness,” Johnson explains. “That’s what guided me to wanting to work with people that need help.”

How does type 2 diabetes affect my clients?

People with type 2 diabetes make up almost 10% of the U.S. population, and people of color are affected at a much higher rate, another reason that Johnson identifies with the community as a woman of color with a Black-owned business.

Many diabetics suffer from neuropathy, a type of nerve damage that can cause numbness in the extremities. Therefore, it’s highly possible for a diabetic not to notice if they have an injury on their foot—they simply may not feel it.

“Diabetes affects the nervous system and the brain’s ability to communicate with the rest of the body,” says Johnson. “For example, if something is too hot for a diabetic, they usually have a delayed reaction, if any reaction at all. Their body hasn’t made them aware that what they’re touching is too hot.”



Diabetics must be careful of not only what they put in their body, but on their body.

The disease can be controlled effectively through medicine, but some complications from diabetes, such as chronic high blood sugar, can weaken the immune system. The risk of severe infection from minor injuries like cuts or scrapes is high, and it can even lead to the need for amputation. This is why it's helpful to have an outside person examining and taking care of their feet, especially for those who cannot do so for themselves due to age, pain, or lack of energy.



Older clients with diabetes require a lot more time and care during their pedicure services.

What should I do differently for diabetic clients?

First, to identify your diabetic or health-sensitive clients, have all new clients fill out a small health form to identify any conditions that are important for you to be aware of. Express to them that this will help you tailor your services to their individual needs.

- **Time** – Allow for more time with a diabetic client. For safety's sake, you never want to rush their service.
- **Communication** – Chat with your client about how they've been feeling. Their answers may give you some clues about their health. For example, numbness or tingling in a client's feet could be a sign of neuropathy. In addition, always ask about

the level of pressure you are using during any massage portion of the service. What's comfortable for another client may be uncomfortable for a diabetic.

- **Temperature** – Be aware of hot temperatures. Check the temperature of the water in the pedicure bowl yourself with your whole hand and wrist. A client with reduced sensitivity in their feet may not be able to feel if the water is too hot. Do not use paraffin wax on diabetic clients.
- **Gentle Scrubs** – Sugar and salt-based scrubs are dangerous for diabetic clients. The rough and jagged shapes of the grains create microtears in the skin during exfoliation, which is perfectly fine for most of us. However, those microtears can lead to infection in people with diabetes. Opt for [scrubs with gentle exfoliants](#).
- **Careful Filing** – Filing the feet and nails must be done very gently as not to create cuts in the skin. Use a [diabetic-friendly foot file](#) and pay extra attention when shaping the nails. Any little cut could grow to be detrimental to a diabetic client.
- **Know When It's Out of Your Hands** – If a diabetic client has an open wound, very strong odor, or otherwise extreme situation pertaining to their feet, do not perform the service and gently direct them to see their podiatrist. Require them to obtain a doctor's note in order to receive future services. Knowing when it's unsafe to perform a service will not only protect your client, but will also protect you from liability issues.



Be sure to communicate with your client about the level of pressure you're using.

What products are available for use in diabetic pedicures?

Joy of Beauty



Joy of Beauty products are diabetic-friendly and made with natural, gentle, and effective ingredients.

Pictured: [Oatmeal + Epsom Soothing Soak](#)

“There are products that diabetics should be conscious of,” says Johnson. “They’re always told to be conscious of the foods that they eat, but they should also be just as conscious of the products and ingredients they’re putting on their bodies.”

Johnson’s experience with health-sensitive communities inspired her to create **Joy of Beauty**, a line of body care products for health-sensitive groups such as people with cancer, eczema, and sensitive skin. Each of these products is especially safe to use on diabetic clients because of the natural, gentle and effective ingredients used.

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“Every ingredient is sourced with the mindset of ‘What’s the purpose? What problem am I trying to solve?’” Johnson explains.



Joy of Beauty Poppyseed & Kokum Whipped Body Butter Scrub

Joy of Beauty’s hero product is the **Poppyseed & Kokum Whipped Body Butter Scrub**, which [won second place in a pitch competition at Cosmoprof North America](#) this past July. Instead of using sharp and jagged grains of salt or sugar, this soothing scrub contains poppyseeds, which are smooth and round. The seeds provide effective exfoliation without creating microtears in the skin, making it truly diabetic-friendly. The scrub also provides much-needed hydration to dry skin.

Other Product Lines

Besides her own line, Johnson has a range of diabetic-safe tools and products she recommends. She lauds **Centre for Beauty** as the leader in health-sensitive nail product distribution, and a company she trusts for diabetic-friendly products. One absolute necessity for working on diabetic clients is a safe foot file that does not cut or grate the skin, and for this, Johnson recommends **Angelfeet**.

She also directs nail techs toward brands like **Footlogix** and **LCN** that take differing health needs into account by providing gentle pedi products for many specific situations. Both brands offer products for professional use and at-home client use. Another professional-only product that Johnson highly recommends is **sa’SHá**, a diabetic-friendly callus care remedy developed by CJ Murray, the owner and president of Centre for Beauty.

Related: **Diabetic Nail Clients: Proceed With Caution**

How can I specialize in diabetic pedicures?

If you're interested in making a difference among the health-sensitive members of your community, one option is to specialize in services for diabetic clients.

An important step in specialization is to make sure you have the proper education. Organizations like the [Professional Beauty Association](#) or distributors like [Centre for Beauty](#) offer helpful educational programs, or can point you in the direction of programs that will move you forward. Speaking to other diabetic pedicurists about their specialization is also a great way to learn.

Johnson also recommends partnering with podiatrists in your area so that you can refer clients to a trusted doctor, and they can refer their patients to you for pedicures. This can foster a strong sense of trust and professionalism in your client relationships. You can start by contacting doctors by with letters of introduction explaining your services.

As a trusted diabetic pedicurist, you'll not only see growth in your business because of the large, underserved population of your niche, but you'll also be providing your clients with a special level of knowledge and care that they may not be able to get at another nail salon.