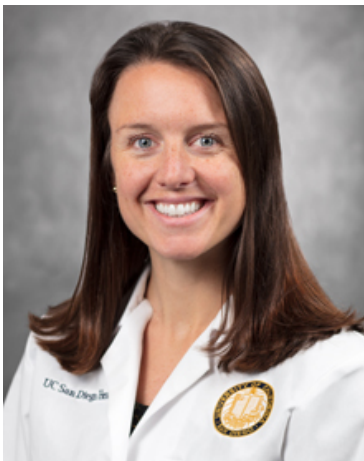


## Corner Clinic: Holiday Anxiety, Manicures and Melanoma and the Prime Pooping Position

By UC San Diego Health Experts | November 06, 2018

**O**ur experts answer your questions on everything from headaches to tummy aches. This month, our experts discuss anxiety around the holidays, manicures and melanoma and a prime pooping position.

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- [Can nail salon lights used to dry gel nails cause melanoma?](#)
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### **How can I deal with anxiety, especially around the holiday season?**

**Laura Sudano, PhD, marriage and family therapist at UC San Diego Health**

Anxiety can be helpful. Without it, we wouldn't get much accomplished. However, anxiety becomes an issue when it affects our relationships, work and ability to function in daily life activities. Anxiety can be triggered by stressful life events, such as holidays, which might include planning dinner with family members we haven't seen in a while, dealing with personality conflicts, managing financial stressors and encountering reminders of loved ones we have lost. But there are

ways you can reduce your holiday anxiety:

- **Practice breathing exercises/meditation.** Sit in a comfortable position with your hands on your lap and your feet flat on the floor. Take a few deep breaths in through your nose and out through the mouth. After three breaths, close your eyes and breathe naturally. Allow your thoughts to come and go, as if you are observing a bundle of sticks floating down a river. Acknowledge your thoughts. Observe them. And just allow yourself to be with them, as they are part of your life. Focus on your breath, with the cool air coming in and warm air going out. Practicing this once a day for three to five minutes can help you reconnect with the present moment. There are also a number of free guided breathing/meditation smartphone apps that you may find useful, such as [Headspace](#) [↗](#).
- **Take comfort in rituals.** Finding ways to incorporate a lost loved one in your celebrations can help decrease anxiety and carry on his or her legacy. Did the person enjoy certain music or foods around the holidays? What other memories of that person can you share? Sometimes reflecting on a lost meaningful relationship can be helpful.
- **Share your anxious feelings.** I recommend talking about your anxieties with a close family member or friend. If you don't have someone to speak with or struggle to turn towards others because you "feel like a burden," you can find support from a free online resource such as [7cups](#) [↗](#), where a global community of trained listeners will try to help you problem-solve during times of distress.

If you continue to struggle with anxiety for more days of the week than not, and you notice a shift in your mood (e.g., becoming more irritable with others) or increased physical symptoms (e.g., rapid heart rate, sweatiness, shallow breathing), then consult your primary care physician and contact a therapist.



**Can nail salon lights used to dry gel nails cause melanoma?**  
**[Amanda Marsch, MD](#), dermatologist at UC San Diego Health**

Ultra violet (UV) lamps are becoming increasingly popular in beauty salons across the United States. These lamps are used to speed-dry regular manicures and are an essential component of "gel manicures." The UV gel nail technique involves application of a premixed gel acrylic to the nails which then requires UV light for polymerization and hardening. The typical UV exposure time per manicure is five minutes per hand, with repeated treatments required every two to three weeks. Similar to tanning beds, UV nail lamps emit mostly UVA radiation, a known carcinogenic, that can cause damage to the DNA, resulting in

cutaneous malignancy. Research indicates that the UV rays emitted by nail lamps are four times stronger than the sun's UV rays.

Because most customers get gel manicures frequently, the repetitive UV exposure may have a cumulative effect, especially in people who start getting gel manicures early in life. Over time, this exposure can cause damage and premature aging of the skin. Some people believe that LED lamps provide a safer option, but this is a misconception, as these lamps also emit UVA light.

Based on the available data, the level of UVA exposure associated with a gel manicure probably isn't high enough to increase the risk of skin cancer significantly, however, both the Skin Cancer Foundation and the American Academy of Dermatology advise consumers to practice caution. Patrons should apply a water-resistant broad spectrum (UVA/UVB) sunscreen to the hands 30 minutes prior to their appointments and consider wearing dark, opaque fingerless gloves which are sometimes provided by the salon or can be purchased online. Also, skip the hand pampering! Water-resistant sunscreens can be easily washed off if the manicurist uses soap and water to soak your cuticles, scrubs your hands, and applies lotion, which is typical for most manicures.

In summary, the risk of inducing melanoma or non-melanoma skin cancer from exposure to UVA nail lamps is very low and can be reduced to virtually zero by wearing fingerless gloves or broad-spectrum sunscreen when the hands are being exposed.



### **Do stools that are supposed to help with pooping positions work?**

**Siddharth Singh, MD, gastroenterologist at UC San Diego Health**

Yes, a stool used while going to the bathroom helps relieve constipation by improving the posture for defecation. A small foot stool raises the knees and increases hip flexion while sitting on the commode. This straightens the recto-anal angle, allowing for easier passage of stool and decreasing straining.

In fact, in several Asian and African countries, squatting on a toilet pan or bowl on the floor is the natural way to defecate. However, squatting on the floor is difficult for overweight people, older people and people with joint issues and disabilities. In these instances, with a seated toilet, placing a stool helps to achieve the same results as natural squatting would.

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