



SHAAN SETH

More men are being waited on hand and foot – at the nail salon

**T**he guys are taking a (finger) tip from the gals these days – and splashing out cash on buffing up their digits.

Increasingly, more males are putting the “man” into manicure, making regular visits to nail salons for neater, cleaner and better-looking hands and feet.

That’s according to a check of eight salons by Urban.

For example, international chain O.P.I, which has two outlets in Singapore, has between 15 and 20 male customers a month, a jump from the five to 10 men a year ago.

Over at local nail salon Flair Nails & Beauty Services, owner Victoria Koh says about 15 men a month trot in for a mani or pedi, almost double that of a year ago.

At Daisy’s Nail Cottage, the increase is even more pronounced with 20 men turning up on average a month, up from just three to five for the same period a year ago.

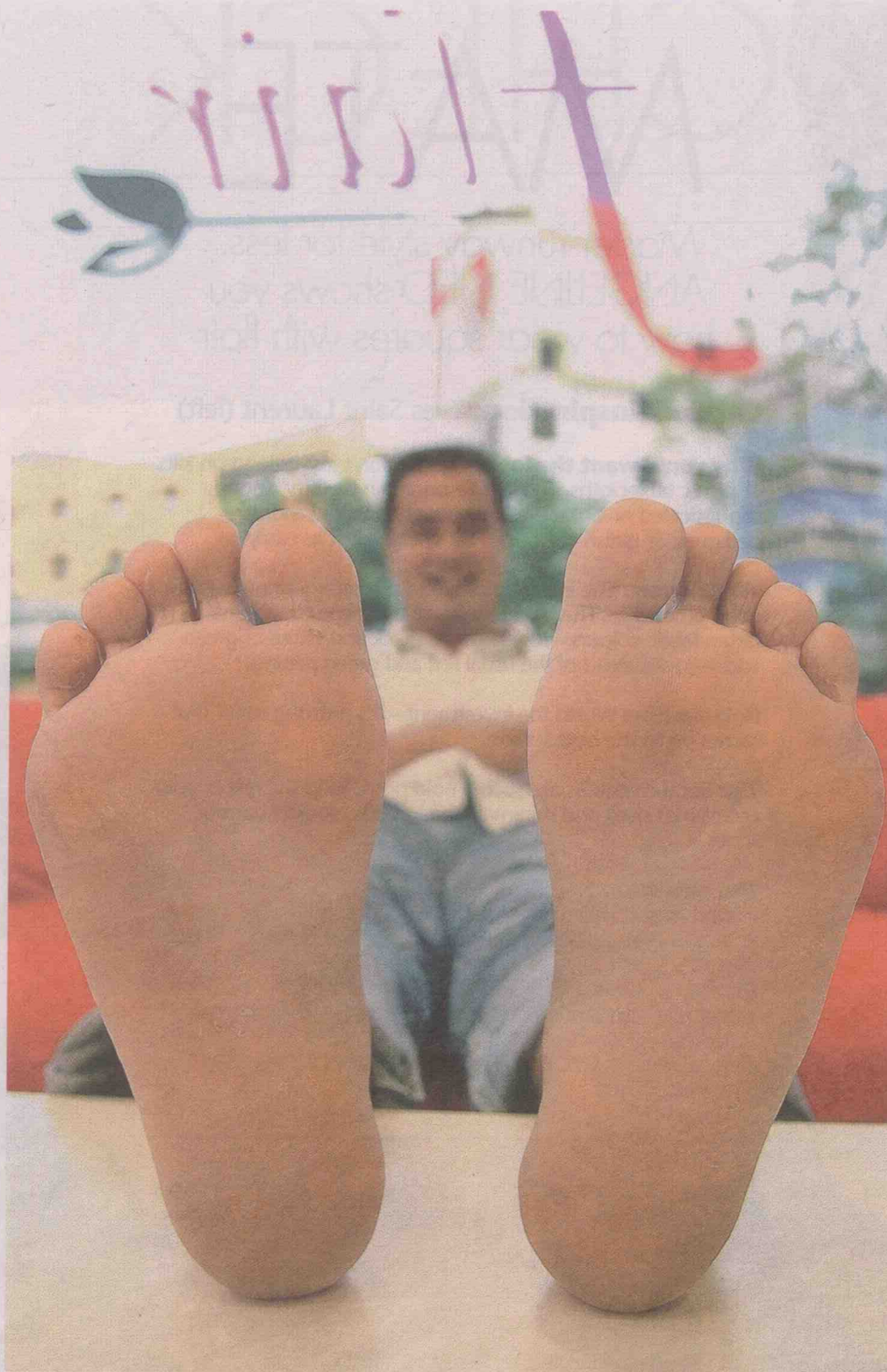
They pay anything from \$20 to \$80 for a manicure, and \$25 to \$85 for a pedi – slightly more than what women fork out. Men are generally charged more because their feet are bigger and their calluses worse, say those in the industry.

The salons say there are two reasons for testosterone types wanting tidier tootsies and fabulous fingernails.

Some want to spruce up their image and enjoy a little pampering at the same time, while others have physical problems such as infections that need attention.

Staff at O.P.I say they often handle male customers suffering from cracked and split nails.

And at local nail salon Fave Nails, which has three outlets, many men turn up seeking help for ingrown toenails caused by wearing closed-toe shoes for prolonged periods.



**HAPPY FEET:** Businessman Mohamed Hussain Zainudeen, 34, gets his manicure and pedicure done at Flair Nails & Beauty Services in Holland Grove Road.

**Photographer:** ALPHONSUS CHERN

Other common problems salons see include thick calluses, hardened, thick skin on hands and feet and fungal infections.

Flair’s Koh recalls: “I once had a customer who had fungus on all 10 of his toenails. I recommended a fungal lotion and had to throw away my tools after treating him.”

One man hooked on talon time is Steven Ong, a private banker in his late 30s. He started getting manis and pedis 10 years ago and now visits a nail salon once or twice a month.

“It’s a luxury and I always feel refreshed after a manicure and pedicure,” says Ong, who suffers from ingrown nails.

He has recommended manicures and pedicures to both his male and female friends and adds: “Some women are surprised. I suppose it’s something different for a guy to do.”

**Dr Wong Su-Ni, a consultant dermatologist with Pacific Specialist Practice,** gives the trend the thumbs-up, noting: “Some fungal infections have been picked up by pedicurists who refer them to dermatologists.”

Doctors point out that fungal infections are best dealt with in clinics. According to Dr Chris Foo, a consultant dermatologist with Raffles Hospital, they need to be treated by a dermatologist, using anti-fungal medication. In some instances, the nail may need to be removed.

Also, salons’ tools must be clean. “Unsterilised tools allow the spread of viral infections such as warts,” says Dr Foo.

Guys can do plenty of hand-and-foot upkeep at home too.

Moisturising regularly will prevent dry, cracked heels. And if you’re in the sun a lot, slap on sunblock to prevent hands developing wrinkled skin.

For those with weak, peeling nails, Tan Juat Li, director of Fave Nails, recommends painting on a strengthener. Macho men worried about a glossy look can use matte shades.

Also, open sandals will help ease the stress placed on toes that often causes ingrown toenails.