

Learn the pros and cons of indoor tanning

What possibly makes you feel better than a hot session under the lights, a dose of essential vitamin D, and a golden glow of confidence in the dead of fall and winter?

Well, hay season is over and its time to hit the bed—tanning beds that is, but be wise.

Since 1980 the FDA (Food & Drug Administration) has been monitoring the tan in a can gang throughout the United States. Research has been conducted in all four corners of the globe to determine the exact correlation between ultra-violet exposure and skin cancer to no real avail.

More than 20 years after the first tests and no one reason directly correlates the two besides obvious, lengthy over-exposure to UV and heredity towards the affliction. Scientists and organizations will be struggling for quite some time before any real conclusions can be drawn, while in the meantime, tanning salons will taking in new customers daily and making them feel better about themselves in the here and now.

Nonetheless, the one thing the sun busters and the sun worshippers seem to agree on is that overexposure to UV will not help you avoid cancer or help your skin maintain its elasticity.

Before ever deciding to fake and bake one should do some research on the countless Web sites pertaining to the industry, consult their physician and talk to a certified tanning salon representative. A great starter can be found at The Suntanning Association for Education Web site: www.suntanningedu.com. Which lists a chart of skin types and

what to look for in signs of melanoma in the skin, who's at greatest risk and what benefits can be found. It also states that most skin damage is accumulated in the first 18 years of life and by protecting yourself or tanning wisely you can greatly reduce your chances of skin damage.

Know your skin type and what kinds of exposure times will be beneficial to you. Finding the right lotion and moisturizers is key to a healthy tan.

If you're burning or peeling after a session you should definitely reduce your time and consult your salon representative to find out which of the many product lines out there pertain to you. Still, protect yourself from the sun on bright winter days by wearing proper clothing, eyewear and SPF. With all the research and new technology being done in the industry perhaps it's alternatively wise to switch over from the bed to a sunless tanner or UV-free session and still reap the awards of beautifully tanned skin with no UV exposure.

Sunless tanners are readily available at local cosmetic and department stores and can sometimes be tedious and hard to evenly apply. On the flip side, they can add to an already existing tan and save your skin in the long run.

It should be noted however, sunless tanners provide no SPF protection from the real winter beams and should not be substituted for the artificial base one would gain in the traditional tanning beds. By combining the safe, moderate use of tanning salons and sunless tanners one can look and feel alive throughout what used to be our palest season.

—By Paul Agius, special

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