

Tanning truths and myths revealed

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NEWS EDITOR

With Spring Break around the corner, hundreds of students will begin tanning routines. But without knowing truth from myth, what you don't know could hurt you.

When it comes to tanning, it is essential to know the facts before beginning a routine.

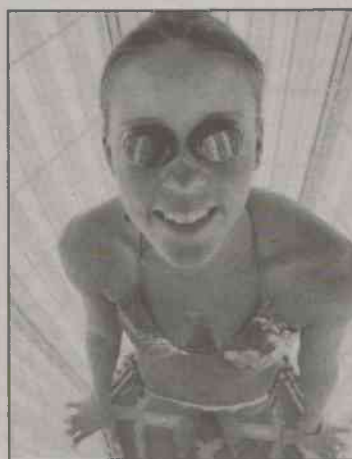
The two forms of Ultraviolet rays that work in concert to produce a tan are UVA and UVB. UVA rays are what tan the skin, and UVB burn the skin. "The only difference between indoor and outdoor tanning is that indoors is a controlled environment. Outdoors is going to change every single day," said Fred Knopp, owner of Tropical Tans for 15 years.

As of yet there is only one way to tan without risk of damage, which is self-tanning lotion. Although some tanning beds limit the risk of melanoma, there is still a risk. If used in excess, tanning beds can result in a burn. "Any burn can lead to cancer," said Jennifer Shores, a Forever Tan employee of four years.

Professional tanning salons help new tanners understand these risks by hanging informative posters and having applicants fill out applications indicating their skin type and tanning experience.

"We also take a look at their skin type and if they have blond hair and blue eyes and obviously haven't been tanning, then we'll only put them in there for a fraction of the time," Shores said.

There are several kinds of tanning beds. The most common are low-pressure beds. While the majority of the beds are horizontal, there are some vertical beds, allowing the tanner to stand up while tanning. All beds have a regulated amount of output; so the 10, 15 and 20-minute beds all give the same amount of tanning rays, Shores said. The different times are mostly for personal preference and convenience.



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"The best way to tan is to raise your time slowly so you burn as little as possible, whether indoors or outdoors," Knopp said. "Low pressure beds are better for people to use before they are going on a trip." This is because the low-pressure beds tan your skin slowly, which builds up a UV-protective layer.

A little newer is the high-pressure bed.

These beds use less UVB rays and use more UVA rays. "There's no burning, and you tan real quick," Todd Doane, owner of Solar Eclipse, said. "Ultraviolet light A penetrates deep into the skin and reaches your dermis, giving you the tan. Ultraviolet light B, that's the real harsh ray. So if you can stay away from those, it's good."

"These beds result in less premature aging and less dryness, but you don't get a

protective layer from these beds, where you would get one from the low-pressure ones," Knopp said.

High-pressure beds limit the cancerous rays; they do not eliminate them.

The last indoor tanning method is the self-tanning lotion. Self-tanning lotion is the only way to tan without any risk of damage to your health.

Besides the traditional self-tanning lotion, there is also a new method that select salons offer, where the tanner is sprayed with self-tanner by a machine to avoid the streaking that the traditional method can result in.

If done properly, tanning can even have positive effects. "Anything in excess is not good for you, but there are some positive effects of some light," Doane said. "For example, if you suffer from seasonal affective disorder you can get light therapy. Sunlight is also the only true source of Vitamin D."

UV rays are also used in hospitals to sterilize surgical instruments, water and air in operating rooms because it has been shown to destroy bacteria.

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