Killer Tanning Facts

The real deal about indoor tanning equipment.

The dark side of tanning
Skin cancer is the most common cancer in Canada, accounting for one third of all new cancer diagnoses. Whether you use indoor tanning equipment or are outside in the sun without wearing protection, you are causing damage to your skin by exposing it to harmful ultraviolet radiation. In fact, ultraviolet radiation emitted from indoor tanning equipment can be up to 5 times as strong as the midday summer sun.

According to a 2006 Canadian Cancer Society survey, more than 50,000 Ontario youth are exposing themselves to dangerous levels of ultraviolet radiation through the use of indoor tanning equipment. In addition, overexposure to harmful ultraviolet radiation puts young people at increased risk for skin cancer now and later in life. In fact, melanoma skin cancer, the most deadly form, is one of the most common cancers among young people in Canada aged 15 to 29.

Read between the lines
The following are some common myths and truths about tanning beds:

Tan myth #1
“I’m healthier with a tan.”

Real deal
You may think you feel or look healthier with a tan but make no mistake—when your skin colour changes due to exposure to ultraviolet radiation, you’re damaging your skin and that can lead to premature aging and skin cancer.

Tan myth #2
“My tan creates a protective layer against the sun.”

Real deal
A tan offers very limited protection, whether it’s from the sun or indoor tanning equipment. Some tanning beds can actually expose you to 5 times as much ultraviolet radiation as the midday summer sun! So getting a “base tan” is definitely not a reason to be spending time in a tanning salon.

Tan myth # 3
“Using indoor tanning equipment provides me with a healthy dose of vitamin D.”

Real deal
Because indoor tanning equipment emits harmful ultraviolet radiation, it makes it a dangerous method of obtaining vitamin D. A few minutes a day of unprotected sun exposure is usually all that is needed for the average person to get enough vitamin D; a nutritional element that can also be obtained from pill supplements. Talk to your doctor about taking 1000 international units (IU) a day during fall and winter months.

The truth is, anyone exposing their skin to ultraviolet radiation from the sun or indoor tanning equipment is putting themselves at risk for skin cancer.
Be aware. Be proactive. Check your skin regularly.
Most skin cancers can be treated if they’re caught early enough. Learn what to look for and check your skin regularly. Make sure that you or someone else checks “hard-to-get-at” places such as your back, back of your neck and ears and backs of your legs.

What you should watch for:
- any birthmark or mole that changes shape, colour, size or surface
- any new growth on your skin—pale, pearly nodules that may grow larger and crust, or red, scaly, sharply defined patches
- any sore that doesn’t heal
- any patch of skin that bleeds, oozes, swells, itches or becomes red and bumpy

Contrary to what some might say, there is no safe way to tan your skin.

Just like the sun, indoor tanning equipment emits ultraviolet radiation (UVR) that causes harmful side effects such as premature aging, cataracts and deadly melanoma skin cancer.

Stay healthy to stay beautiful.
Skin damage adds up over one’s lifetime and is irreversible. Whether you’re going to a tanning bed or outside without sun protection, you’re damaging your skin. And when the tan fades, the damage will still be there.

For more information, please visit: www.cancer.ca

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