

Learn How to Reduce the Risks of Tanning Beds

So you want to get tan? Welcome to the world of tanning. But how will you begin your journey to that "golden" land? Developing a tan has come a long way since tanning became popular early in the 20th century, when Gabrielle "Coco" Chanel (creator of that famous line of perfumes) started a fashion trend when she accidentally got a tan, sailing from Paris to Cannes, aboard the yacht of the Duke of Westminster. Today, almost anyone can get a tan indoors, with the rapid growth of those popular tanning salons opening in every city. Now you'll want your journey to be a safe one and with every journey there are choices to make, different roads to take and advice to get from those who have taken the journey before. Let's prepare properly for this journey by becoming aware of the "rules of the road" to tanning.

No Burning Perhaps the most important rule of the road to a great tan is, "No burning allowed". Just as speeding on the highway is dangerous, so also is trying to "speed" your way to a tan by burning. It is dangerous and actually counterproductive to your goal. Let me tell you why. Your skin knows how to protect itself against the effects of the sun's ultraviolet rays, or in this case, the effects of tanning beds you might be laying on. When certain UV rays hit your skin, it reacts with a complex process that ends in the production of melanin, a protein that protects your skin from UV rays. And guess what? Melanin is tan in color! But if the skin receives too much UV light in too short a period of time it will turn red, an indication that it could not produce that protein fast enough to protect itself. And, instead of a tan, you've got a burn. What's worse is now the skin has to spend time repairing itself instead of producing melanin. So what's the rule here? You will not get to your goal of tanning any faster by trying to burn your way there. It's dangerous and actually makes the whole process longer because you've damaged your skin with a burn, instead of protecting it with a tan.

Know Your Own Body One very important question to ask yourself is, what's your skin type? When you get into a car you need to know what that car can and cannot do. The same thing is true for your body. As you might have guessed, the lighter your natural skin, hair and eye color, the more difficult it will be to get a tan. There are variations to this rule so combine it with what you already know about your own body. And I hate to rain on your parade, but if you burn easily in the sun and have a lot of trouble tanning, you're not going to have any more success with tanning beds.

Medical Considerations Have you ever gotten a prescription from the pharmacy that warned you about the dangers of driving while taking that medication? Believe it or not, there are quite a number of medications (both prescription and over-the-counter types) that increase the potential dangers of tanning beds, because they sharply increase your skin's sensitivity to UV rays and therefore sunburn. Another consideration if you're a woman, is that of pregnancy. Although UV rays don't penetrate past your skin, pregnancy and tanning beds include other concerns. The bulbs that tanning beds use can produce quite a bit of heat that might be uncomfortable and possibly harmful. If you're in the later months of pregnancy, you wouldn't be comfortable climbing into a tiny sports car and a tanning bed might be a bit of a challenge for you as well. Finally, there is the issue of tanning beds and cancer. If you have a personal history of skin cancer, are tanning beds safe? The answer is unfortunately no, they are not. If you have any doubts or questions about this section you should check with your personal physician, before embarking on this road to tanning.

Choosing The Right Facility Last but not least on your road to a golden tan is choosing the best and safest place to get that tan. All tanning beds are not equal. So which one should you use and how long should you use it for? The person responsible for this is the Tanning Facility representative. And the professional salon with the most responsible representative is your goal to find. Here are a few items that will help you determine what salons are trustworthy:

1. Were you asked to fill out a tanning profile before you begin your actual tanning?
2. Were you given a statement about radiation that you were asked to read and sign?
3. Were you asked what medications you are currently using?
4. Were you instructed in the proper use of protective eyewear?
5. Were you cautioned not to tan outdoors within 24 hrs of using the tanning beds?
6. Were you given adequate instructions as to the operation of the equipment?
7. Is the facility clean?
8. Are the tanning beds cleaned after each client's use?

If you entered a tanning bed facility and were not met with the above questions and care, you might as well leave and keep looking. The operators are responsible to help you get to your goal of tanning as safely as possible, based on what your relationship to tanning has been in the past. They are trained to know how long you should spend on your first visit, your second visit and on from there. They will explain the process to you so you will achieve your goal in the safest way possible. They should not allow you to put yourself in danger by taking unnecessary risks. To put yourself into their hands means just that! Be reasonably sure before you take that step.

About the Author

Your Medicare Prescription Drug Plan will have identified pharmacies in your area to be part of their network.

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