

# AGGIElife

THE BATTALION

## Is darker really better?

By MELISSA SOROLA-BILANO  
The Battalion

It's summertime, and a favorite leisure activity for some Aggies is tanning. The look of a tan has long been synonymous with health and being sexy.

But for what many call a "healthy tan" can actually harm them in the future.

Dr. James N. Childs, a dermatologist in College Station, said he sees more and more patients coming into his office with sun related skin damage.

Along with the most serious side effect, skin cancer, Childs said sun worshippers can also suffer from premature aging, visual abnormalities and a weakening of their immune system.

Ultraviolet (UV) radiation comes in two forms. UVB rays come from the sun and UVA rays are emitted from indoor sources, like tanning beds.

Childs said there is a common misconception that tanning at an indoor parlor is safer than tanning outdoors, when there is really no safe way to tan.

Because the UVA rays from tanning beds have longer wavelengths, Childs said they penetrate the skin deeper and can do more damage.

Childs warns against using "clam" type tanning beds which tan both sides of the body at one time.

"There are areas of the body exposed that should never see the sun," Childs said.

While he does see some men with sun damage, Childs said he mostly treats women with sun damage and is starting to treat skin cancer in people at a younger age.

Childs said the growing pressure to look good at any cost and it's affect on how a person feels about themselves is partly to blame for this phenomenon.

"People think if they are not tanned they aren't attractive, while nothing could be further from the truth," Childs said. "When I see someone with a tan, I think they look bad and that they are uninformed about what they are doing to their skin."

"What you think is a healthy look is actually damaged skin and there will be a price to pay in the future," Childs said.

Another side effect of tanning is

### Tanning may bring complications

premature aging in the form of wrinkles.

Childs said he has patients who have taken good care of their skin and look younger than they are, and then he has patients who are in their 40s who have not taken care of their skin and they look much older.

Childs said there are several warning signs of skin cancer people should look for.

Any scaly patch of skin that flakes off and reoccurs, a bleeding sore, and irregular moles and freckles, meaning they have grown or are discolored, are all things a dermatologist should checkout, Childs said.

Childs said whether or not a person gets skin cancer also depends on a person's genetic predisposition and their skin type.

An alternative to tanning is the use of self-tanners. Self-tanners come in the form of lotions, sprays and gels, and give the appearance of a tan without exposing the skin to harmful UV rays.

Available almost everywhere, self-tanners range in price from \$70 at high end department stores to \$10 for a low end version found at drug-stores.

In an article for post-gazette.com, "Self-tanners can solve the problem of overexposure to sun," author LaMont Jones talks about the improvement of self-tanners over the years.

"Technology has improved such that typical complaints — a fake orange hue, zebra-like streaks, fast fading color — are becoming a thing of the past," Jones said. "And most now contain soothing and nourishing natural ingredients such as aloe to pamper skin."

Childs advocates the use of self-

tanners, but reminds people to still use sunscreen, as many self-tanners do not contain UV protection.

For students walking to and from classes, Childs suggests they wear a sunscreen with an SPF of at least 15 with both UVA and UVB protection.

Childs said sunscreen should be worn even on cloudy days and to try and avoid being outside from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., when the sun's rays are most harmful.

The American Academy of Dermatology (AAD) has denounced the practice of tanning and along with the Ameri-

can Medical Association (AMA) are trying to stop the sale and use of tanning equipment.

The AAD Website offers tips to staying safe in the sun such as planning activities when the sun's rays are not as strong, wearing protective clothing like

wide brimmed hats, wearing a broad spectrum sunscreen with an SPF 15 or greater and wearing sunglasses with 100% UV ray protection.

Childs said while there is nothing that can be done about past sun damage, people can start now to prevent future damage. A change in the attitude towards being pale could also decrease the number of sun related skin damage dermatologists treat, Childs said.

"It's fine to be pale," Childs said. "That's the color God made you and you shouldn't try to change it."



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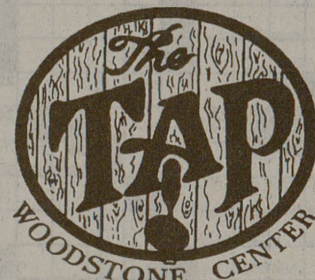
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