

AGGIELIFE

THE BATTALION

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Tanning 101

Students, experts weigh tanning's cosmetic benefits against its health risks

By Kelcey Rieger
THE BATTALION

As the temperature heats up, students are searching for ways to acquire a golden tan to complement the upcoming swimsuit season. While some may take to the beaches or poolside, there are other sun-seekers who may seek a tan indoors.

Carrie Rivera, a sophomore kinesiology major, said she used to frequent indoor tanning beds because she likes the way a tan looks.

"I think people look better when they are tanned," she said. "I have gone to a tanning bed before to get rid of the 'after winter white shock.' But I would only go two or three times a week for one month, because I tan pretty easily just out in the sun."

Rivera said indoor tanning is expensive, which is one of the reasons she doesn't tan more.

"To me it is not worth it," she said. "I don't care as much now, as I did in high school when price wasn't the issue, but appearance was. Now I just don't have the time or the money, and getting a great tan is not a priority."

Price can be an issue for many indoor tanners, so alternatives such as sunless tanning lotion and sprays offer a cheaper way to get that golden glow.

"I used a sunless tanner a long time ago," Rivera said. "But, I didn't think it worked that well. It gets stuck in the cracks of your knees and fingers, making you look two-toned and streaky."

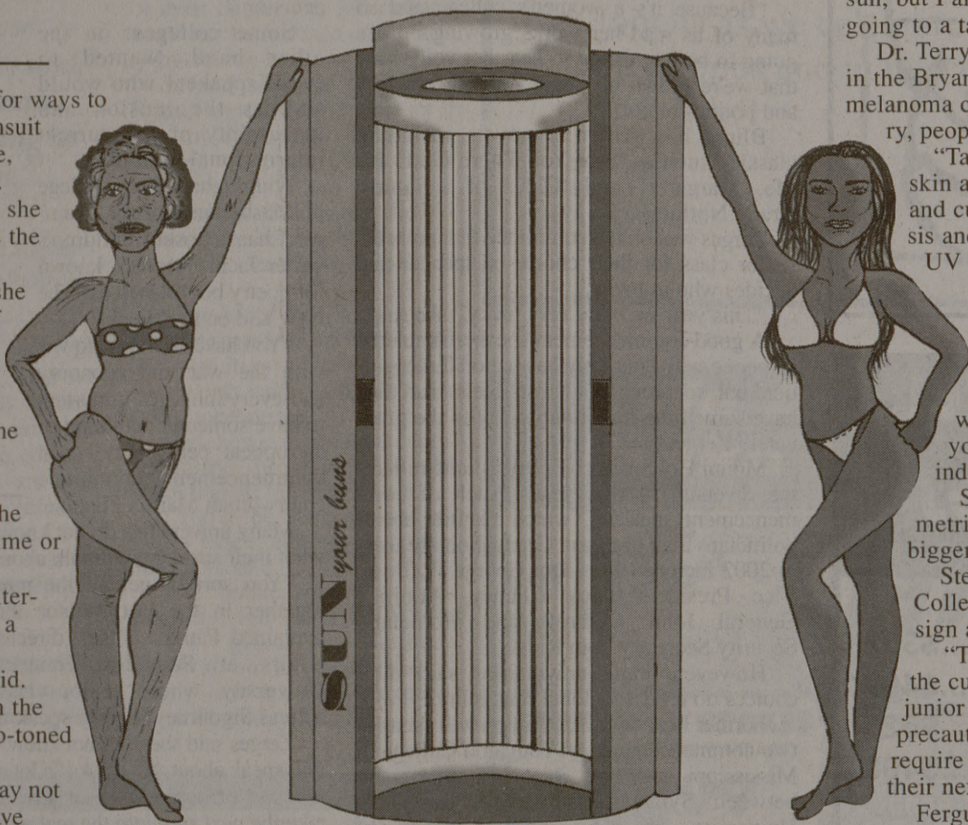
Although Rivera's experience with a sunless tanner may not have produced positive results, sunless tanning lotions have improved according to Abra Posey, a sales consultant for Clinique.

"Getting a tan doesn't have to mean dealing with sun damage," Posey said. "Cosmetic lines like Clinique carry great sunless tanners that don't turn you orange and do not streak. Sunless tanning lotions and sprays are a great way to get a great tan without the risk of damaging your skin."

Posey said the majority of the people who buy products from their self-tanning line are women, but there are quite a few men who opt for the tan in a bottle.

Jarod Cain, a junior civil engineering major, said he does not see a point in men paying money to get a tan, whether through "fake bake" or lotion.

"I don't understand why guys will go to great lengths to get a tan



BECKY MAIDEN • THE BATTALION

when they could just go outside and take their shirts off," he said.

Cain said he thinks indoor tanning is more for women because they tend to show more skin, but guys usually wear a T-shirt with sleeves and shorts that go down to their knees.

"Indoor tanning is more of a feminine thing," he said. "A guy going to a tanning bed seems a little vain. Almost like they are trying to be too perfect."

Cain said he is a little wary of tanning beds and the sun in general because his family has a history of skin cancer.

"My mom had melanoma, which can greatly increase my chance of getting skin cancer," he said. "It's not like I avoid the

sun, but I also don't expose myself to UV rays on purpose, like going to a tanning bed."

Dr. Terry Jones, a board-certified dermatologist who practices in the Bryan-College Station area, said an increased incidence of melanoma can run in the family. With or without a family history, people should heed the risks of tanning, he said.

"Tanning beds have UV lights that penetrate deep into skin and the effects of the penetration are non-reversible and cumulative," he said. "Early aging, wrinkling, keratosis and skin cancer are all short- and long-term effects of UV exposure."

Jones said the risk of getting skin cancer has increased from one in 10,000 about 50 years ago to the present statistic of one in 75.

"Last year in my private practice, I saw a rise in malignant melanoma cases, especially in younger women," he said. "Four of the six cases that were young women with malignant melanoma were avid indoor tanners."

Signs of skin cancer include moles that appear asymmetric, have irregular borders, have changed color or are bigger around than a pencil eraser, Jones said.

Stephanie Ferguson, manager of Bronze Body in College Station, said tanners at her salon are required to sign a consent form before tanning.

"Tanning salon regulations are posted in the salon for the customers as required by state law," said Ferguson, a junior agricultural development major. "There are certain precautions the salon takes to protect the customer. We require customers to wear goggles and wait 24 hours until their next tanning session."

Ferguson said Bronze Body customers range from 15 years old to 50 years old, but most are in their early 20s to late 30s. The average session, she said, lasts 20 to 25 minutes. Not everyone is a potential candidate for the tanning beds, however.

"If you tan easily in the sun, a tanning bed is a good way to get the tan you desire," Ferguson said. "But if you cannot tan in the sun and are a very white, fair person you probably won't be able to tan in a bed."

Jones said laws have been passed in the state of Texas to regulate tanning salons and their practices, but continuous exposure to ultra-violet rays is still very dangerous and harmful to skin.

"I don't think a tan is healthy because it is your skin's protective reaction to sunlight," he said. "If you insist on tanning indoors, do it as little as possible, but know the consequences."

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