

# MYTHS and FACTS

## Myth:

A base tan protects me from sun damage.

## Fact:

A tan is a sign that you've damaged your skin. Once the tan fades, the damage remains. A base tan will give you the same protection as a sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of 2-3.<sup>11</sup> If a sunscreen with SPF 15 is the minimum recommended, is it worth getting permanent damage to your skin just for a tan? *Find out how to protect your skin [here](#).*

## Myth:

It's better to tan indoors in a safe, controlled environment.

## Fact:

UV radiation is harmful, no matter how you get it. Tanning indoors cannot change UV radiation into something that is healthy. There is no evidence showing that indoor tanning is less harmful than sun exposure.<sup>12</sup> Tanning beds can be more dangerous because some can give off UV radiation that is 10-14 times stronger than the sun's.<sup>13</sup>

## Myth:

Tanning beds are a good way to get my Vitamin D.

## Fact:

There are safer and cheaper ways to get vitamin D. [Canada's Food Guide](#) recommends that everyone over 2 years of age drink 500 mL (2 cups) of milk or fortified soy beverage every day to get enough vitamin D. Speak to your healthcare provider if you do not drink milk or fortified soy beverages. They can help you figure out if you need a vitamin D supplement (which costs less than 1 cent per day) in addition to eating other vitamin D-rich foods.<sup>14</sup> Vitamin D is needed for bone health, but all other benefits claimed by tanning advocates are unproven.<sup>15</sup>

Those at risk for vitamin D deficiency include those who:

- are pregnant,
- are over the age of 50,
- have dark skin,
- don't go outside often, or who
- wear clothing that covers most of their skin.<sup>16,17</sup>

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# MYTHS <sup>and</sup> FACTS

## Myth:

**A tan is a sign of health and beauty.**

## Fact:

A tan is a sign that you've created permanent damage to your skin. Exposure to UV radiation leads to negative health effects such as early aging of the skin. Wrinkles, frown lines, spider veins, and loss of skin tone are signs of early skin aging. These signs can start to appear in teenagers and young adults.<sup>18</sup>

## Myth:

**There is no proven connection between tanning beds and skin cancer.**

## Fact:

The world's leading authority in identifying the causes of cancer, the International Agency for Research on Cancer, has placed UV radiation from tanning beds in the highest cancer risk category.<sup>19</sup> Other substances in this category are cigarettes, plutonium, and mustard gas. We know that using tanning beds before the age of 35 increases your risk of melanoma, the deadliest form of skin cancer, by 59 percent.<sup>20</sup>

[Check out the Big Burn](#)