**Tanning Myths**

**Myth: Having a tan is healthy.**

No, it’s not. Changes in your skin colour mean it’s been damaged and skin damage can lead to premature aging of the skin and skin cancer and there’s nothing healthy about that. If you have to have that tan, a sunless tanning cream is a much better way to go. And don’t forget – even with a fake tan sunscreen should still be a priority when you’re out in the sun.

**Myth: My tan protects me from the sun.**

Think again! A tan offers almost no protection from sunlight or burning. Not only does the tan from a tanning bed not protect you from the sun, it actually does even more harm. Tanning beds can expose you to up to five times more UV radiation than you’d get from the sun. Protect your skin by covering up, seeking shade and using sunscreen.

**Myth: I’ll get my vitamin D by going to the tanning salon.**

Tanning beds are not a safe way to get vitamin D. It is safer to get it from the sun (just a few minutes a day will get you enough vitamin D), supplements, and your diet. In the fall and winter when the sun’s rays are weak, a supplement is a much safer and cheaper way to get your vitamin D than visiting a tanning salon. Talk to your doctor if you are concerned about not getting enough vitamin D.

**Myth: Sun damage is temporary. Skin repairs itself.**

While a sunburn or suntan will eventually go away, the underlying skin damage isn’t going anywhere. Sun damage builds up with each exposure to the sun. It can take 10 to 30 years for the effects of sun damage to become apparent.

**Myth: I don’t need to protect my skin on cloudy or foggy days or in the winter.**

Up to 80% of the sun’s rays travel through light clouds, mist, and fog. In winter, more than half of the sun’s rays are reflected off the snow, increasing UV levels. The problem is worse at higher elevations.

**Myth: Only people with Type I skin have an increased risk of skin cancer from tanning or People with dark skin can’t get too much sun.**

People with Type I skin (very fair skinned, freckled; always burns, never tans) are at greater risk for developing melanoma and other skin cancers from tanning, but regardless of skin type, tanning increases a person’s risk of skin cancer. For more information on skin typing, visit the [Canadian Cancer Society](https://www.cancer.ca) website.

**Source:** Canadian Cancer Society, *Indoor Tanning*