

## Make no mistake about it, tanning can be deadly

Thank you for drawing attention to the dangers of tanning with your March 9 front page article, “Wrong Side of the Bed.” As an esthetician and owner of a local skin salon, it is my job to examine people’s skin and help guide them to treatments and products that will result in improved skin health. It is out of my scope of practice to diagnosis skin cancer, but I do point out and monitor suspicious lesions and advise clients to seek a doctor’s opinion.

I’m also in a position to talk with clients about lifestyle choices that affect their skin health, including smoking, diet and sun exposure. Every spring and throughout the summer, I ramp up sun safety education in my business. I hand out fact sheets from the Skin Cancer Foundation, and I write about it in my client newsletter, Facebook posts and on my blog. In addition, I give out samples of sun protection products, give sun safety presentations, and I educate clients individually who report tanning or present with sun-damaged skin.

Despite all my efforts and the increased marketing by the Skin Cancer Foundation and similar entities, I still hear comments from people who tell me the information is not sinking in. Or worse, persons know better but choose not to practice sun safety.

Some objections I hear from people regarding sunscreen use are, “It’s cloudy, I don’t need to wear it,” “It’s winter, there’s no sun,” and, “It’s cold out.” Then there are the misconceptions about getting a “base tan” before a vacation or thinking dark skin doesn’t burn.

Quite simply, people, if the sun is up, UV rays are coming down. Even though the potential for sun damage is highest March through September, each of us needs to wear sunscreen year-round because the adverse effects of the sun are accumulative.

As Erin Selin’s article noted, there are several short-sighted reasons people tan such as peer pressure or society’s perception of what beauty is. The majority of my clientele is older than 30, when sun damage from teen years starts to show up as dark spots or the skin is prematurely wrinkling. These clients, with their 20/20 hindsight, often express regret about the sunbathing habits of their youth or the lack of skin health education available when they were younger. I’ve learned through my younger clients who were born in the ’80s and ’90s that sun safety now is taught in school. Still, many persons choose to ignore the skin tanning warnings and tan anyway.

The health effects of UV exposure are serious, and people are dying from skin cancer. Melanoma, the most serious form of skin cancer, is on the rise and has no respect for age. According to the Skin Cancer Foundation, melanoma accounts for 6 percent of cancer cases in teens 15 to 19, and melanoma is the most common form of cancer for young adults 25 to 29 and is the second most common form of cancer for young people 15 to 29. In other words, skin cancer is not just an “oldperson’s” disease.

Over the course of a person’s life, the odds of being diagnosed with a form of skin cancer are one in five. Prevention now is so much easier than treatment later. Applying sunscreen daily is one of the best anti-aging steps you can take for your skin. For more information about skin cancer and a detailed list of preventative measures, go to [www.skincancer.org](http://www.skincancer.org) or [www.aad.org](http://www.aad.org).

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Guest Opinion

