

## Skin Deep

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TINA FINEBERG FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

**NO SUNSCREEN REQUIRED** A customer gets a spray tan (hold the UV rays) at Sundara, an airbrush tanning salon in New York.

By DOUGLAS QUENQUA

**F**OR many of us, the news that tanning beds are now considered a cancer risk on par with cigarettes and asbestos was less an “aha” moment than confirmation of a truth we’d long suspected: there is no such thing as a healthy tan, at least not one caused by UV rays.

After reviewing previous studies, the International Agency for Research on Cancer, part of the World Health Organization, reclassified tanning beds from “probably carcinogenic” to simply “carcinogenic,” saying the risk of melanoma increases by 75 percent in people who begin using tanning beds before the age of 30. The agency’s research was published on The Lancet Oncology’s Web site last month.

It is too soon to tell how the tanning bed business will be affected. James Oliver, chief executive of Beach Bum Tanning, with more than 25 salons in New York state, said “people are coming in and asking about it, but we have not seen a decrease in business.” But the study is prompting many in the blogging community to ponder if “pale is the new tan.”

Others wonder if sunless tanning options that don’t rely on UV rays — spray tanning, bronzers and tanning creams — may benefit from the study.

Natalie Cupid, manager of Sundara, a spray-tan salon in Midtown, said that even before the study she had noticed a move away from the UV solution. “A lot of our clients have not sworn off beds but have definitely become more aware that they are not as healthy as perceived,” she said.

One Sundara client, Caroline Brennan, 32, is among those who still wants a tan, but without the UV rays. She has given up tanning beds for good, she says. Spray tanning allows her to stay close to her natural hue, and not “look like the woman from ‘Something About Mary,’”

## A recent report on cancer risk may make options without UV rays more attractive.

she said, referring to Magda, the super-tanned character in the film.

Indeed, many companies that formulate tanning creams and sprays have tweaked their products for those who want a more subtle tan. Nearly all still rely on DHA, or docosahexaenoic acid, an omega-3 fatty acid, which causes a chemical reaction with the amino acids in dead skin that turns it brown. But by balancing DHA with other agents like erythrulose, a natural keto-sugar that also reacts with amino acids, some manufacturers, including Fake Bake and Vani-T, have inched toward a natural looking tan, as opposed to the Oompa-Loompa orange often achieved in the industry’s youth in the 1990s.

“We have seen some innovation in self tanning with a lot of products getting better and better,” Karen Grant, an analyst with the NPD Group, said. “There’s less of an orange glow, and less streaking.”

Manufacturers are also adding anti-aging and moisturizing elements. The Jergens Natural Glow line, for instance, advertises itself as a moisturizer first and adding anti-aging and moisturizing elements. The tanner second; it contains smaller traces of DHA that have a gradual but cumulative effect, producing a tan after repeated use.

Such innovations have not been sufficient to keep the market growing, however. Sales of tanning lotions and sprays began declining in 2007, and dropped about 20 percent in 2008, according to NPD. Those declines continued through the first quarter of this year.

Folks in the sunless tanning industry are

quick to blame the economy for the decline, but others see it as a change in aesthetics.

Nina Jablonski, an anthropology professor at Penn State and author of “Skin: A Natural History,” has observed a gravitation toward “accepting and enhancing what you’ve got” rather than “making a quantum leap in skin color,” thanks in part to celebrities like Nicole Kidman and Scarlett Johansson who have gone public with their aversion to tanning. The tanning-bed cancer study will likely add to that sentiment.

“What we’re seeing is growth of the natural trend as people are looking toward a more natural-looking skin,” Ms. Grant from NPD said. “The heavily baked look is not as much at the forefront as it was.”

Manufacturers have responded to the “natural” trend by adding new botanical ingredients. A recent big seller among sunless tanners was Clarins Delicious Self-Tanning Cream, which contains cocoa and something called “caramel micro pearls.”

And early next year, Fake Bake, a company in Tulsa, Okla., that’s been turning people brown(ish) since 1996, will unveil a tanning face cream that contains the stem cells of apples, which the company claims have an anti-aging effect.

Others are focusing on “antioxidants, paraben-free products and natural instant bronzers such as walnut shell and coffee bean extracts, just to name a few,” said Rick Norvell of Norvell Sunless, which produces high-end tanning sprays for salons.

Even Lindsay Lohan is getting in on the action, having recently introduced a “natural” self tanner called Sevin Nyne that deploys a combination of DHA and cocoa. She was quickly named in a lawsuit by a Florida chemist claiming she stole the formula. Miss Lohan responded last month to the suit via Twitter: “No formula was stolen for Sevin Nyne! It’s a woman looking for a payday. That’s it!”

Defenders of tanning beds are not ready to concede defeat. Dan Humiston, president of the Indoor Tanning Association, railed against the media’s reaction to the study, which he says only confirmed what everyone already knew: a burn from an indoor tan is as dangerous as one obtained at the beach. Time spent in the sun or on a tanning bed is all about moderation, Mr. Humiston said. “People are so fanatical about abstinence as their only option,” he said.



ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES FOR WET REPUBLIC  
**HOLD THE SUN** Lindsay Lohan has introduced a tanning mist.