



## **Sunless Tanning: It's Come A Long Way Baby**

By: Jeri Ross, MPH

Today's clients are interested in more than just applying a self-tanning lotion. As an aging baby boomer in my early 50's, my body reflection doesn't match my youthful self image and it is showing with brown spots, sagging thighs, and cellulite. I've followed a healthy lifestyle and exercised regularly since I was in my 20's. Certainly that helps, but I need more now to preserve what I have and to improve what I can. I decided to buy a self-tanner to cover up the flaws and make my white body look healthier as it does with a tan. What I discovered from seeking out solutions for myself is that modern-day self-tanners have come a long way from that bright orange hue of yester years. Not only can self-tanners give you a more natural, tanned look but some also offer added value with multifunctional benefits designed to address skin rejuvenation concerns such as body contouring and cellulite.

I have become a fan of sunless tanning, but I'm not the only one. According to a recent report in Global Cosmetic Industry Magazine, worldwide sales of sun products including self-tanners exceeded \$5.6 billion in sales in 2006 with a seven percent annual growth rate. Sunless tanning is a growing industry that continues to change and improve as technology drives product development and services. What better place for women and men to learn about and purchase their safe, natural, golden tans than in the spa/salon? Here are some sunless tanning education basics and emerging product innovations that will provide you with satisfied clients and improve your bottom line.

### **Benefits of Sunless Tanning**

More and more of your clients are aware of the health risks and damages to the skin from ultraviolet radiation (UVR) sun exposure and sun burn. What they may not know is that skin cancer is the most common form of cancer in the United States. More than 1 million skin cancers are diagnosed annually. One in 5 Americans and one in 3 Caucasians will develop skin cancer in the course of a lifetime.

A very high percentage of age-associated cosmetic skin problems can be attributed to sun exposure. Chronic overexposure to the sun changes the texture and weakens the elastic properties of the skin. In addition photoaging causes wrinkles, hyperpigmentation or freckles and age spots. The good news is that skin cancer and photoaging is largely preventable. Prevention efforts include using a broad-spectrum sunscreen UVA- UVB when in the sun and reducing as much sun exposure as possible. More evidence is reported by the National Cancer Institute that substantiates that tanning beds increase the risks of skin cancer.

For the thousands of us who desire a tanned face and body, using self-tanning products and services is a safe and effective option. Another great benefit of sunless tanning is you can have a year-round tan. If you prefer to sunbath, sunless tanning performs when the sun doesn't.

### **Sunless Tanning: How It Works**

Skin color is produced by melanocytes present in the basal layer of the epidermis. Melanocytes determine skin color or pigment. Ultraviolet rays from the sun trigger melanogenesis, the process of increasing melanin in the epidermis that results in a darker skin color. Natural tanning and self-tanning mechanisms are totally different. The self-tanning effect is not melanin pigmentation but a coloring of the surface layer of the epidermis, the stratum corneum. So natural sun tanning occurs in the inside layers of the epidermis while sunless tanning works on the outside layer. A sunless tan typically lasts for 5 to 7 days and fades as dead cells shed. To maintain the tan most products suggest that you reapply the self-tanner about every three days.

All self-tanners including salon spray and air brush tanning contain DHA (dihydroxyacetone) as the FDA approved active tanning ingredient. DHA is a colourless 3-carbon sugar that when applied causes a chemical reaction with amino acids in surface skin cells producing a darkening effect. DHA is considered by experts to be completely safe. Even with a name

like dihydroxyacetone, the origins of this ingredient are plant based typically from sources such as sugar beets and sugar cane.

DHA is not new to self-tanning being introduced in 1960 by Coppertone's Quick Tan or QT Lotion. Other companies soon followed. However, these pioneer products cast an unattractive orange hue on the body. Being a researcher, I had to question what has changed to produce a more natural looking tan using the same active ingredient, DHA? What I discovered is that **how** DHA is manufactured has improved which makes sense based on advancements over the years in biotechnology. So the DHA of today is not the same DHA of yesterday.

### **Sunless Tanning in the Spa/Salon**

According to one of our colleagues, Doron Zahal in his article, [The Business of Safe Tanning](#) (Dermascope, Feb 06), spas and dermatologists have discovered the affordable and profitable opportunity in adding spray tanning to their menu of services, to open the door and invite in new clients. I asked both spa directors and esthetician/body therapists how they have integrated sunless tanning services and products to realize this 'profitable opportunity' and this is what they said.

Educating the client about the benefits of self-tanning in conjunction with services like Intense Pulsed Light (IPL) laser treatments that target hyperpigmentation caused by sun damage is a natural fit. Anti-aging exfoliating body treatments are another great entry point to suggest sunless tanning services and products. If you notice peeling dry skin and/or sun damage during a massage session, you can suggest a self-tanner that you carry in the spa that moisturizes and tans. Apply your self-tanner at the end of a massage on the legs or after a facial on the arms at no cost as an introductory offer to promote sunless tanning. Experiencing the results will dispel skepticism that the product will turn the skin orange.

To achieve success with air brush tanning, go for quality product and equipment. Orange hue and streaks can be a reality with air brush tanning depending on the brand you select and the application device. Try it before you buy it. Identifying someone in the spa that will take ownership of being the air brush tanning expert goes a long way towards promoting the service. The good news is anyone can do it, so a make-up artist or front desk person may be the right person. Promote it by spray tanning all of the spa staff. Give away spray tans at your spa promotional events to jump start sales.

### **Next Generation of Self-Tanners**

With the popularity of sunless tanning growing, companies have been increasingly manufacturing a diversity of performance enhancing self-tanners. Multifunctional products are on the rise that do more than just tan. Recent technology has produced products that contain DHA and actives that firm and slim the body. Some formulations are utilizing effective ingredient delivery systems like liposomes that promote deep penetration and even all-over absorption to prevent streaking. More features that are available include gradual daily tanners that also moisturize with such ingredients as shea butter, products that offer three skin-tone shades, or added skin protecting antioxidants such as A, C and E.

Spa directors report that self-tanning products are a natural retail sell-through for services including air brush tanning, massage, body exfoliating, and cellulite treatment. Clients respond very well to the multifunctional products that tan and slim, for example, to promote the benefits of their endermologie series. It is well known that cellulite does not seem as obvious when the area is tanned. Self-tanning can be an add-on as the ending step to a massage and/or paired with anti-aging body exfoliating treatments as a bronzing service that is offered on your body treatment menu. Include the client's take-home self-tanning product in the price of the spa treatment.

### **Quick Sunless Tanning Tips for Clients**

If you offer sunless tanning services and products in your spa/salon be prepared to provide your clients with some basic tips to achieve best results.

- **Exfoliate before an air brush tan or applying a self-tanning product:** Sunless tans do best with a mild, surface exfoliation that is not an oil based product. Loofahs may contribute to streaking.
- **Wear gloves:** Self-tanners can stain the palms. If you don't want to wear gloves, wash hands immediately after applying with soap or use a hand sanitizer.
- **Moisturize rough spots:** Apply moisturizer on rough spots (knees, elbows) before applying self-tanners to avoid uneven tanning.
- **Wear sunscreen:** DHA gives no protection from the sun. If you are going to be in the sun you have to wear sunscreen. If a self-tanner has SPF in it, the amount is usually minimal.

Today your clients have choices that you can satisfy with professional quality self-tanning, anti-aging body treatments. Not all self-tanners are created equal. Prove why your products and services exceed what can be purchased in a drug store with the 'more factor' of what **you** can deliver, better results that rejuvenate the body for longer lasting health and beauty.

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