

***The truth about tanning***

We are working with The Public Health Agency (PHA) and local cancer charity Cancer Focus Northern Ireland to bust some of the myths that surround tanning using advice from the World Health Organisation:

**MYTH:** My skin is only damaged if I get sunburned

**THE TRUTH IS:** Tanning without sunburn can still cause premature skin ageing and increase the risk of skin cancer. Each time skin is exposed to UV radiation from the sun or from a sunbed, the risk of developing skin cancer is increased.

**MYTH:** When choosing sunscreen, the only important consideration is the sun protection factor (SPF).

**THE TRUTH IS:** Sunscreen should have an SPF of 15 or higher for protection against UVB rays. The other important consideration is that sunscreen also provides protection against UVA rays and has a star rating of 4 or higher for UVA protection or has the EU  logo.

**MYTH:** Sunbed tanning is safer than sun tanning

**THE TRUTH IS:** Sunbeds do not offer ~~‘~~safer tanning~~’~~ People who have used a sunbed at least once have a 20% higher risk of developing melanoma (the most serious form of skin cancer), than people who have never used a sunbed. This risk increases with each additional sunbed session.

**MYTH:** A tan is healthy and attractive

**THE TRUTH IS:** A tan is a sign that your skin has been damaged from exposure to UV radiation, from the sun or sunbeds – **it is not a sign of good health.** Over exposure to UV radiation can speed up skin ageing, increase your risk of skin cancer and can be harmful to your eyes.

**MYTH:** Using a sunbed will give me a base tan and prevent me getting sunburned on holiday

**THE TRUTH IS:** Any tan is a sign of skin damage, including a ‘base tan’. Research has shown that a sunbed tan does not reduce the risk of sunburn from sun exposure and may even increase it by giving a false sense of protection.

**MYTH:** Using a sunbed is a good way to top up Vitamin D

**THE TRUTH IS:** Studies show that using a sunbed is not an efficient way to generate Vitamin D.

For more information on how to take care in the sun and the risks associated with sunbeds visit [www.careinthesun.org](http://www.careinthesun.org)

**Visual – UV exposure poster**