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sunscreen-free day at the beach, which leads to weeks of no protection in the summer, which leads to slathering on Crisco and heading for the equator.

"It's best not to tan, but once a year is still safer than going crazy in the sun all year, as the effects are cumulative," concedes David J. Leffell, professor of dermatology at Yale School of Medicine. Tanning "is not damage-free to the skin—it's just less so than sunburning," Franks says. A burn is the worst, since "sunburns even once a year can increase the risk of melanoma," warns David Bank, assistant clinical professor of dermatology at Columbia University/New York-Presbyterian Hospital in New York City.

ARE TANNING BEDS REALLY SO BAD?

Let's put it this way: How bad are cigarettes, mustard gas, and arsenic?

Last July, the International Agency for Research on Cancer equated tanning beds to these dangers, and added them to its highest-risk category—unequivocally carcinogenic to humans.

"One burn in a tanning bed equals 10 to 12 sunburns," Bank says. And "the risk is particularly high for younger users," Franks says. People who use tanning beds before age 30 increase their lifetime risk of melanoma by 75 percent. Indoor tanners are also 2.5 times more likely to develop squamous-cell carcinoma and 1.5 times more likely to develop basal-cell carcinoma. While the majority of these cancers are not life-threatening, their excision can cause scarring.

And there are the potentially deadly melanomas. "I cut out so many melanomas from young, beautiful women and men who frequented tanning salons pre-prom in high school, and in college, to feel relaxed," Mammo says.

But if the prospect of skin cancer isn't scary enough, how about a nice case of warts? "I've seen women get warts and herpes from tanning beds," Shamban says. "Not all the people running tanning-bed parlors necessarily clean them all that well." In fact, in a recent study of ten tanning salons on Manhattan's Upper East Side, investi-

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SUN FUN

Screen Savers

New products offer vitamin D, sheerness, and more.

NEUTROGENA SPECTRUM™ ADVANCED SUNBLOCK LOTION SPF 50 A new concoction of the original Helioflex formula (which enhances UVA protection) adds the antioxidants soy feverfew, and vitamin E to act as a "second layer" of protection against UV damage, says Macrene Alexanian-Armehakos, assistant professor of dermatology at Yale School of Medicine.

COPPERTONE SENSITIVE SKIN FACES SPF 50 This blends zinc oxide and aloe extracts, which are a good fit for delicate or acne-prone skin, says Ranella Hirsch, clinical assistant professor of dermatology at Boston University Medical Center.

SKINCARE PHYSICALS™ SENSITIVE SKIN DEFENSE SPF 50 This fluid reduces redness and is "completely sheer," Hirsch says—a rare feat for a sunscreen with physical protection.

LAURA MERCIER FACE SHIELD WITH ADAPTOGENS SPF 50 It contains adaptogens, herbs speculated to help the body resist damage by moderating its response to environmental stress. The herbs are interesting and warrant study, Hirsch says.

OCEAN POTION WETBEN TECH WATER SPORT SPF 50 It's best to get vitamin D (up to 1,000 IU daily) from the diet or a supplement, not the sun, dermatologists say. This sunscreen promises to provide 100 IU of it in a one-ounce application. Though Hirsch would like to see this verified by clinical data not yet released by the company, "I like the concept," she says. —*ANNE MEE*