

Anna Coogan gets expert advice on how to give yourself the perfect tan

THE IRISH are now the primary consumers per capita of fake tan in the world, making us bona fide tan lovers. So what changes can we expect in the coming years in our tanning habits? Will we choose to fake rather than bake this year? Oonagh Clarke is the managing director of French Cosmetics, the distributors of skincare, tanning products and body and beauty cosmetics.

"Since Brigitte Bardot took to the beaches of Saint Tropez in the 1950s in a bikini, having a tan has been synonymous with health, wellbeing and beauty," she says.

"Yet, half a century later, the dangers of tanning have become apparent with thousands literally dying every year to get a tan."

Oonagh has observed many changes in sunless tanning/fake tan products over the years - Bronz' Express, distributed by French Cosmetics has been on the market for 50 years.

She originally studied science in UCD before turning her hand to beauty, graduating from the Coogan Bergin College.

"By the 1980s we were beginning to understand the significant danger that the sun poses to our health. And by the 1990s women were beginning to turn to sunless tanning/fake tan products to get that feel good factor all year round," she says. "Dihydroxyacetone (DHA) has been the main ingredient in self-tanners since the 1960s and remains so to this day, and is likely to do so for the foreseeable future."

"It works by causing a chemical reaction with amino acids in the stratum corneum - the top layer of the skin - and effectively stains the skin brown," she says.

And Oonagh believes the death of the sun bed is imminent, despite our rainy climate.

"The sun bed was born during the 1980s and 1990s when many of us could not get enough of a tanned look."

"However, it has emerged that the sun bed is, in fact, incredibly dangerous and a primary cause of skin cancer in this country. I predict that it's only a matter of time before this industry becomes regulated with strict guidelines being enforced," she says.

Oonagh foresees other changes in our booming fake tan industry: "We have a new cosmetic tanning aide that works from the inside out, Bronz' Express Sun To Drink. It is ingested for at least 10 consecutive days prior to the exposure of skin to the sun, and awakens dormant melanocytes, the cells that initiate the tanning process."

"I foresee two other big trends which will

emerge in the future. Irish women have always loved a deep tan but are opting for a more natural glow. So forget the mahogany tans of old and opt instead for a slight glow that merely takes the edge off pale limbs," she says.

"Another major trend I see emerging is the male tanning market. There's no denying that men look just as great with a tan as women, but up until now have traditionally shied away from sunless tanning products."

"I predict that more and more men will turn to tanning," Oonagh says.

Oonagh's 10 tips for fake tanning

1 Preparation - exfoliation
Sunless tanning product adheres to rough, uneven surfaces, so skin needs to be even and smooth to ensure a less patchy finish. Exfoliate the skin well the day before.

2 Preparation - moisturise?
While it is advisable to moisturise the skin in the run-up to the tan, avoid moisturising on the day of the tan application, as the lotion causes a barrier that the tan can not penetrate.

3 Preparation - cosmetics and toiletries
On the day of tan application, avoid wearing other cosmetics and toiletries, such as deodorant, perfume, talc or make-up. The ingredients in the tan can react to acids in deodorants and perfumes, causing the skin to go slightly green.



TANNING TIPS: Oonagh Clarke

4 Choosing product - formulation
While finding the best product for you is mostly down to trial and error, look for best-sellers from each range, which is often a good indicator of what works really well.

5 Choosing product - tints
For some sunless tanners the formulation is see-through or white, while others are tinted a tan colour. For ease of application and to ensure an even coverage, choose a tinted tan rather than a colourless one.

6 Application - technique
Apply tan in long, even strokes, using a mitt, such as the Bronz' Express Application Mitt (€5.95) to avoid staining the hands.

7 Application - timing
Most tans need a number of hours to really work. Try to apply tan last thing at night to allow eight hours to really become apparent.

8 After care - showering
The following morning, use a mild soap in the shower, but avoid scrubbing the skin. The first phase of the tan should wash off, leaving the real tan evident on the skin.

9 After care - moisturise and exfoliate
Many tans last for around one week. Begin moisturising the skin from the first day after the tan has been applied to keep the skin supple. Allow a day or two before you begin to exfoliate the skin to help the tan wear off evenly.

10 And finally...
If in doubt, opt for a professional tan in a salon like Bronz' Express Professional Spray Tan. For more information log onto www.frenchcosmetics.ie

Bestselling fake tans

Soltan Beautiful Bronze Self Tan Tinted Gel (150ml) €13.35.

No 7 Quick Dry Tinted Lotion (200 ml) €16.25.

Ambre Solaire No Streak Bronze Dry Body Mist Dark (125ml) €16.99.

No 17 Lasting Glow Wear Off Self Tan Skin Tint Gel (125ml) €8.29.

Johnson's Holiday Skin Body Lotion Normal To Dark (250ml), €7.09.

All available at Boots

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