

you're still encouraging premature skin ageing and putting yourself at risk of skin cancer. Here are 10 things to bear in mind when it comes to tanning...

1 Tan clings to dry and dead skin cells. Exfoliate before you apply your tan to ensure an even, streak-free result and afterwards (from day three after application) to prevent your tan from fading patchily.

2 Knuckles, wrists, elbows, the creases of the armpits, knees, ankles and toes are dry spots, so tan is inclined to gather around them. A little oil-free moisturiser massaged onto these danger zones and given time to sink in before tanning, will help prevent that.

3 By the same token, if you apply moisturiser all over just before tanning, your tan will be less intense and could be prone to streaking.

4 Get your desired shade while still ensuring that skin is well-hydrated by moisturising the night before.

5 The best time to apply tan is within 30 minutes of showering (once skin is dry and has cooled down), as skin will be perfectly clean.

6 Use gloves and/or a tanning mitt to avoid tell-tale

in the bathroom. It's the easiest place to clean after applying tan. Failing that, be sure to use a dark towel to protect your flooring.

7 Oh, and don't make things more difficult for yourself by trying to work around a bikini — this is a job that's best done in the nip.

8 Tie up long hair out of the way in a bun or wrap it in a towel. Start with your legs, and then work upwards and outwards. While it's important to make sure tan is well blended, rubbing too hard will cause an uneven finish.

9 Gently smooth the product on instead, a little at a time, and opt for a tan with a tinted guide colour so that you can see exactly where you've covered.

10 A willing helper makes easy work of hard-to-reach areas. If you're flying solo and don't fancy shelling out on a high falutin' tan applicator, a friend of a friend gets great results using... a long-handled dishwasher sponge from Lidl that cost €1, for tanning her back. True story.

11 You only need a minimum of product to tan feet and toes, so lightly sweep whatever's left on your mitt after doing your legs across them.

TRIED & TESTED

BODY WASH

Will it clean, soothe and scent your skin to perfection, or just get you all in a lather?



SUE CONLEY

TIME to clean up your act. Everything we do for the next few weeks is about getting ready to self tan, so let's start with sparkling-clean skin. Washing away impurities means your exfoliant doesn't have to work so hard. As I am weeks ahead, I can tell you that it's worth the trouble: I am rocking an amazing tan...

OLAY Body Wash plus Body Butter Ribbons, €7.49 ★★★★★

Well, it's very cool at the start: two different coloured ribbons of soapy goodness — one the fragrant wash, the other body butter — to mix together in your palm to bestow moisture and cleanliness on yer bod. It smells good and feels good, but I'm not sure if there's a softening of skin.



THE BODY SHOP Sweet Lemon Shower Gel, €6.50, ★★★★★

Nothing like the zest of lemon to start off your day. I loved the citrus freshness of this gel, and felt that it really helped open my eyes as much as it cleaned my skin. I wasn't mad about the scent though; I felt like someone was going to be moved to dash a bottle of gin over my head. I'm saying that like it's a bad thing?



LACURA Macadamia Oil Body Wash, €0.95 ★★★★★

This is as good as anything for which you'd dole out way more: it smells good, and leaves you feeling really clean and silky smooth. Like, seriously silky. Better hurry to Aldi and pick up yours, because I may nip over there and snap up a case of this.



JO WOOD ORGANICS Langa Cleansing Body Mousse, €17 ★★★★★

Well, this is fun, squirting mousse all over yourself like you're an ice-cream sundae in search of whipped cream. But then you realise that a little bit of this does not go a long way. Not economical, but entertaining.



PHILOSOPHY Unconditional Love Perfumed Shampoo, Bath and Shower Gel, €22, ★★★★★

Ooh, I'm so scared of putting anything that's remotely soapy on my hair! The gel was fine in the shower and bath, very bubbly, if way too fragranced and I was pleasantly surprised to find that my head did not look like it had been thatched. Won't be making a habit of it, though.



LIZ EARLE Orange Flower Botanical Body Wash, €12.25 ★★★★★

Gorgeous! I dispensed way too much the first time round. So much lather! So luxurious! I didn't regret it, not really, but don't want to use this up too quickly. The scent is light but lovely. Really, really good.



>TOP TANS



>FOR BODY

TanOrganic, €29.99
Lancôme Flash Bronzer Leg Gel, €29

Leave hands and fingers 'til last and press them onto your bum, where they'll pick up colour without making your knuckles look like they've been Tangoed.

>FOR FACE

St Tropez Everyday for Face, €19.90
Clarins Delectable Self Tanning Mousse SPF15, €34

9 Use baby wipes to gently remove any excess tan from areas such as the toes or the eyebrows. If you find that you've missed a patch once the tan develops, mix some of the tan used with moisturiser and use it to fill in the area. Be sure to blend well at the edges.

>FOR BOTH

Academie Bronz' Express Face & Body Tinted Lotion, €20.95

>GRADUAL TANS FOR A SUBTLE, BUILDABLE COLOUR

L'Oréal Paris Nutrisummer, €9.99
St Tropez Everyday for Body, €17.40
Fake Bake Fair, €25.72

10 Wear loose, dark clothes and underwear after applying your tan, and avoid getting wet for six to eight hours until your tan has developed fully. However, when you do hit the shower, pat rather than rub skin dry afterwards and be sure to keep on moisturising to prolong the lifetime of the tan. It is also worth remembering that most self-tanners don't contain an SPF, so be sure to use a separate sunscreen.

4 orange palms. Close-fitting latex or surgical gloves are ideal and will give you as much control as if you were using your bare hands. Eco worriers, such as myself, can pick up a sturdy, reusable pair of sized hairdresser's gloves in salon-supply stores.

In addition to protecting palms, tanning mitts help ward off streaks as you can use them to lightly buff on your tan. Resembling orange, mini oven-gloves, they're widely available for a couple of quid in pharmacies and department stores.

Vaseline will prevent tan from adhering to cuticles and nails if you prefer to go bare-handed; it'll also keep eyebrows and the hairline free from tan.

5 Applying your tan in front of a full-length mirror will make it much easier to see any spots you've missed or that need blending. If you have a long mirror that you can move around, park it



Tan studded bag, € Miss Selfridge

Multi-coloured print bag, €16 @ Alwear

Teal bag, €102.99 @ www.simplybe.ie

Yellow shoulder slouch bag, €59 @ House of Fraser

Pyramid bag by Mischa Barton, €52 @ Littlewoods, Ireland

Jungle floral embroidered bag, €68 @ Accessorize

Tan studded duffel bag, €35 @ Faith