

How great could this vacation be! The Vegas resort spa offers 20 minutes in a tanning pod for absolutely free! Or the Tokyo hotel offers spa experiences that include barefoot girls walking on your back, followed by a session in a tanning bed.

They promise you'll come out looking like a popular celebrity. Yeah, if the celebrity is the leathery-skinned King Tut mummy. If you really think you look good with a Palm Beach or Palm Springs tan you get from lolling in a little ultraviolet light box, it's all right. Right? No, it is all bad, especially for senior travelers. Have you ever wondered why those tanning beds look like coffins?



Cancer experts have declared tanning beds to be as great a risk of cancer as a lifetime of puffing cigarettes, taking regular doses of arsenic or being exposed on the battlefield to mustard gas. The risk of regular use of tanning beds increases cancer risk by a factor of five to one versus regular, moderate natural sunbathing.

They point out that people under age 30 who are regular tanning bed users are at great risk, because long-term use almost guarantees skin cancer within two decades. For seniors, the risk is just as bad, because their skin depths get thinner as they age, allowing the damaging ultraviolet exposure to work much faster and deeper, not only potentially causing melanoma, the deadliest kind of skin cancer, but also exposing bones to the same deadly risks.

Of course, overexposure to the sun's ultraviolet rays can be dangerous, too. Dermatologists recommend sunning, particularly for those age 55 and above, to be limited to 15 to 30 minutes a day. Additionally, protective creams should be applied heavily whenever the skin is exposed to the sun for more than a few minutes.

For those who want that healthy bronze look, there are spray-on and rub-on creams that create the effect without damaging the skin. As for those attractive tanning bed offers you get at your favorite resort spa, just stay away from them.