

FEATURES

PAGE 16

TUESDAY, JUNE 9, 2009

[HEALTH]

The light and dark sides of tanning

Is it possible to achieve a healthy glow that's truly healthy?

BY JANE E. BRODY
NY TIMES NEWS SERVICE, NEW YORK



"You've been in the sun," a woman remarked when she saw me last month, a hint of disapproval in her voice.

"No," I was pleased to reply. "I just use a tinted face cream and makeup to match."

You see, I've learned my lesson, sort of. I've had four precancers (medically, actinic keratoses) removed from my face in recent years, the consequence of decades of unprotected exposure to ultraviolet radiation from the sun. From my teens through my 30s, I devoted hours to baking in the summer sun coated with baby oil, not sunscreen.

So far I've been fortunate — no skin cancers yet and minimal facial wrinkles at age 68. But I decided awhile back not to push my luck. I would rather not be the one in six Americans who eventually develops skin cancer. So I apply a facial moisturizer with sunscreen several times a day, and in spring through fall I minimize my time in the midday sun. I also wear sunglasses with full UV protection both for comfort and to protect against cataracts.

But I admit to two failings. Despite the admonitions of my dermatologist, who gives his patients guidelines called "Confessions of a Pale Dermatologist," I don't wear hats even though I know I should don one with a 10cm brim when walking or working outdoors. And I still love that tan look.

Now, though, I can acquire a summery glow far more safely from a tube.

ATTITUDES ABOUT TANS

A walk through pharmacy aisles attests to the popularity of two kinds of products: potent full-spectrum sunscreens that protect against cancer-causing sunburn and wrinkled leathery skin, and artificial tanning lotions, creams and sprays. When used correctly, these tanning products can safely provide natural-looking color (not the orange tinge of products past) without the risks of UV radiation.

Sunless tanning products are hot sellers despite the push of some fashionistas, like Simon Doonan, creative director of Barneys New York, who insists that the bronzed look "is very '80s porno star, unhealthy and kind of sleazy." In the current issue of *The Skin Cancer Foundation Journal*, Doonan cites examples like Tilda Swinton, Michelle Obama and Lucy Liu to show that what is now in fashion is "healthy, natural glowing skin" — the "color you were born with."

Still, a summer tan seems to be coveted by many Westerners, whose values spread easily to others. Despite the traditionally prized porcelain skin of Asian cultures, in a survey of 546 Asian Americans published last month in *The Archives of Dermatology*, Emily Gorell and colleagues at Stanford University School of Medicine found that the more westernized the respondents, the more positive their attitudes toward tanning and sunbathing, and the more negative toward the use of sun protection.

And according to a 2006 report in *Pediatrics*, only minimal progress has been made in persuading American teenagers to adopt sun-protective behaviors.

In two nationally representative surveys, conducted in 1998 and 2004, Vilma Cokkinides, an epidemiologist at the American Cancer Society, and colleagues found that in both years, about 70 percent of teenagers reported having been sunburned during the summer. There was a significant decrease in sunburns among younger teenagers and an overall increase (to 39 percent from 31 percent) in those who said they

regularly used sunscreen. But there was little change in time spent outdoors during the peak sun hours of 10am to 4pm and an increase in days spent at the beach.

In the 2004 survey, only one in three teenagers reported using sunglasses, one in 20 said they wore wide-brimmed hats, and two-thirds agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, "I look better when I have a tan."

ADDING COLOR WITHOUT SUN

Those seeking a safe tan have a choice of products called sunless tanners and bronzers, including daily moisturizers, brush-on powders and sprays that gradually add a tan to the skin that washes off over time. These products use a color additive — a colorless sugar called dihydroxyacetone, or DHA — that darkens the skin by reacting with amino acids in the dead cells on the skin surface. The sun, in contrast, affects the deepest layers of the skin.

It is important to note that most of these products do not contain sunscreen ingredients and will not protect you from harmful UV radiation. Nor will the resulting tan protect you. You still will need to use sunscreen with an SPF value of 15 or higher (preferably 30 or higher in the summer). The most effective products contain a micronized form of titanium dioxide, which provides excellent protection without leaving you white as a ghost.

Tanning products that lack sunscreen must contain a warning on the label; consider it a word to the wise: "This product does not contain a sunscreen and does not protect against sunburn. Repeated exposure of unprotected skin while tanning may increase the risk of skin aging, skin cancer and other harmful effects to the skin even if you do not burn."

FOLLOW INSTRUCTIONS

In choosing a product, pay attention to the shade. If you are light-skinned, look for products marked for light to medium skin tones. Those marked dark work best on people with naturally darker complexions who tan easily.

If you use a spray-on sunless tanner, be sure to follow the package directions. Keep the spray away from your eyes, mouth and mucous membranes. The risks of inhaling or ingesting DHA are not known.

To avoid uneven color, first wash with a soapy washcloth to remove dead cells that are ready to flake off. You may also apply a moisturizer to your skin before spraying. Apply very little of the product to dry-skin areas like knees and elbows, which take up more of the color. And be sure to wash your hands before touching your eyes.

Dead skin cells are sloughed off or worn off every day, and your entire epidermis is replaced every 35 to 45 days. In most cases, the color from sunless tanners is gone within a week. So most products require reapplication about once every three days to maintain the color.

The US Food and Drug Administration warns against the use of tanning pills. These contain large amounts of a color additive called canthaxanthin, which can settle in various parts of the body and damage the retina of the eye. The pills can also cause nausea, cramps and diarrhea.

The Skin Cancer Foundation has produced many helpful brochures, which can be ordered through its Web store, www.skincancer.org.

[SOCIETY]

Why new dads don't always love their baby

A group of authors want to break the 'conspiracy of silence' over fatherhood's guilt, misery and pretense

BY AMELIA HILL
THE OBSERVER, LONDON

Fatherhood can be boring and demoralizing, according to a new genre of confessional literature written by men who are willing to admit feeling indifferent towards their young children — or even positively disliking them.

A growing number of fathers are breaking with convention and speaking out about how a new baby does not always bring great joy. "I wrote my book because of this persistent and disturbing gap between what I was meant to feel and what I actually felt," said Michael Lewis, author of *Home Game, An Accidental Guide to Fatherhood*, published this week.

"I expected to feel overcome with joy, while instead I often felt only puzzled. I was expected to feel worried when I often felt indifferent. I was expected to feel fascinated when I actually felt bored.

"For a while I went around feeling guilty all the time, but then I realized that all around me fathers were pretending to do one thing and feel one way, when in fact they were doing and feeling all sorts of other things, and then engaging afterwards in what amounted to an extended cover-up.

"Fatherhood can be demoralizing. I usually wind up the day curled in a little ball of fatigue, drowning in self-pity."

Lewis is just one father who has broken

ranks recently to overturn what he says is "a great conspiracy of silence" between men not to admit to each other or to their wives the truth about the "potential misery of fatherhood."

He admitted that, for the first six weeks of his daughter Quinn's life, he felt nothing more than "detached amusement." "The worst feeling was hatred," he said. "I distinctly remember standing on a balcony with her squawking in my arms and wondering what I would do if it wasn't against the law to hurl her off it. The reason we must be so appalled by parents who murder their infants is that it is so easy and even natural to do," he said. "Maternal love may be instinctive, but paternal love is learnt behavior. And here is the central mystery of fatherhood: how does a man's resentment of this ... thing that lands in his life and instantly disrupts every aspect of it for the apparent worse turn into love?"

"A month after Quinn was born, I would have felt only an obligatory sadness if she had been rolled over by a truck. Six months or so later I'd have thrown myself in front of the truck to save her from harm. What happened? What transformed me from a monster into a father? I do not know."

Ben George, editor of the literary journal *Ecolone*, agreed that it is time for fathers to find the courage to stand up and talk honestly about "the dark moments of fatherhood."

"The strong, silent father type became



Proud father Wu Hongbin holds his new born baby girl on August 8, 2008 in Beijing.

PHOTO: BLOOMBERG NEWS

declass a good while ago," said George. "Gone are the days when it was acceptable, maybe even desirable, for a dad to be remote, enigmatic, impenetrable, emotionally inaccessible, unknowable.

"The job requirements for today's father seem to have proliferated. They are unique to

this age, achieving a precarious balance between manliness and sensitivity," added George, who asked 20 fathers to write essays revealing the unvarnished truth about fatherhood for his new book, *The Book of Dads*, to be published later this month. "We need to admit that dads frequently experience the desire, at times, to be

anything other than a father."

One contributor to the book is Darin Strauss, the best-selling author of *Chang and Eng*, a book based on the life of the famous conjoined Bunker twins, which he co-adapted into a screenplay with Gary Oldman. "It's different for women," he said. "When my son was a minute old, my wife held him up and asked, 'Don't you love him so much?' I didn't really understand how she could ask such a thing. That purple squirming howler? 'He seems nice,' I said. Men, I think, need to be won over."

Steve Doocy, the Emmy award-winning broadcaster and author of the forthcoming book *Tales From the Dad Side: Misadventures in Fatherhood*, believes he knows why fathers are so different from mothers. "New mums are better at parenting than new dads, but there's a reason why: they are programmed to mother," he said. "There is a mega-mother industrial complex made up of thousands of magazines, books, classes and TV shows that instruct women on how to raise the perfect child.

"Across the gender aisle, fathers are usually clueless about what to do. There are no special father TV shows, zero articles in men's mags on 'nine simple cures for nappy rash,' and certainly no practice-dad toys like dolls," he said.

"A man doesn't have much of a foundation in fathering. It's more on-the-job training — and it starts the day he becomes a father."