Peeling skin after using a tanning bed

Alice,

Last week, I was in a tanning bed, yes, I know I shouldn't do this, and I was put in for too long. I was severely burnt. Now that the redness has gone away, my skin is peeling all over. I was wondering what you could suggest for me to put on my skin so the peeling is less visible or to help it out.

Answer

Dear Reader,

Peeling skin is never a comfortable situation. Unfortunately, once your skin is burned, it's burned. There isn't a treatment nor any course of action that can take away or cure a burn, which will heal at its own pace. Certain strategies may help ease your discomfort.

- Use skin moisturizer. Because your skin is dry, choose a cream or lotion with aloe to help soothe your skin. Most moisturizers on the market accomplish the task of moisturizing your skin, so find one that feels luxurious rather than irritating.
- Stay hydrated. Your skin is dehydrated as a result of the burn, so drink plenty of water. Take a bath or shower intermittently, perhaps every other day, rather than every day, so you don't further dry out your skin.
- Use a cool or cold compress against your skin (press, don't rub). When you shower or bathe, make the water temperature cool. Also, pat yourself dry, don't rub, with the towel. Sometimes, cool water can not only feel good, but will also help to soak away excess flakes.
- Avoid the temptation to peel or pick at your skin. You increase your chances of getting an infection if you create open cuts or sores by peeling or picking. If skin is hanging, snip it off with clean, fine scissors so you don't pull at skin that is still attached. Once you trim your skin (or it falls off), apply a thin layer of antibacterial cream or ointment, such as Neosporin or bacitracin, to prevent infections.

As you mentioned, tanning beds, especially without protection, are not the best practice for healthy skin. Exposure to UV rays, whether outside in the sun or inside in a tanning booth, damages skin. Knowing that, limit your exposure and be sure to apply a broad-spectrum sunscreen or other product containing at least SPF-15 before you are out in the sun or go to a tanning salon.

Or, consider some of the new self-tanning products. Their quality has improved and skin color
choices have expanded in the past year or two, so that you end up with more natural looking results. That way, you have a healthy look without the health risk.

Alice!
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