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photography by Ondrea Barbe

SHOULD YOU USE THAT
GIFT CERTIFICATE TO A

tanning salon?

It might not be something you would opt for on your own, but since you already have the freebie, why not indulge?

That, says New York City-based dermatologist Jody Alpert Levine, M.D., makes about as much sense as deciding to cash in a gift certificate for a pack of Marlboros. “The ultraviolet radiation you’re exposed to in a tanning bed is a carcinogen, just as tobacco is,” says Levine, who co-authored a review on the dangers of indoor tanning for the *Journal of the American Academy of Dermatology*. She’s far from alone in her view. So do you toss that gift certificate – or use it? To find out, turn the page.

No!

And don't even consider regifting that tanning certificate.

TOSS IT!

HERE'S WHY

The Food and Drug Administration, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Institutes of Health and World Health Organization have all issued warnings about the use of indoor tanning beds and lamps. An eight-year study in Norway and Sweden followed women who regularly used tanning beds and found they have a 55 percent greater chance of developing melanoma than their counterparts who skipped the tanning salon, while a Dartmouth Medical School study revealed that users of tanning lamps more than doubled their risk of developing squamous cell carcinoma and were 50 percent more likely to develop basal cell carcinoma.

There are short-term risks to tanning booths as well. Hundreds of people visit emergency rooms in the United States each year because of sun-bed injuries — from severe sunburns and eye damage to an exacerbation of lupus symptoms. And, if you think a few minutes in a tanning bed are less dangerous than the same time spent in the noonday sun, think again. First off, some new tanning machines emit 15 times more UV radiation than the sun. Second, clamshell tanning beds can reach skin that has never been exposed to UV rays before — increasing your risk for sunburn. You might do well to heed the warning on the sun beds themselves: “Repeat exposure may cause premature aging of the skin and cancer.”

HEALTHY ALTERNATIVES