

SELF TANNING LOTIONS

Ever since a bronzed Coco Chanel came back from a Mediterranean holiday in the 1920s and made the tan the hottest fashion accessory, women have been going ga-ga over golden skin.

There is no doubt having a tan makes you feel thinner, sexier and healthier. However, these days baking in the sun is becoming increasingly unpopular as more women (& men) realize the sun's UV rays age skin faster than anything (not to mention increase your chance of developing the deadliest form of skin cancer, melanoma).

If you're ready to skip lying out but don't want to give up glowing skin, self-tanners are a great bet. Self-tanners can darken skin for up to a week thanks to dihydroxyacetone, or DHA.

Here we have a look at top self-tanner picks based on tester and expert reviews.

Guerlain's Terracotta Self-Tanning Spray for the Body (Steep)



In 1984, Guerlain of Paris created the first bronzing powder they called "Terracotta". At €30 - €40 it's still one of the best spray tanners on the market. So how does it rate among testers? Testers overall found it dried very quickly so they could dress within 5-10 minutes of application. Overall colour was very natural, a brown colour rather than orange and the tan deepened as the hours went on. No orange colour reported. Smell factor was average like most self-tanners, some testers found the smell was less apparent after the first shower. One con is the price. This is not a cheap self-tanner.

L'Oreal Sublime Glow for the Body (Cheap)



This is a great, inexpensive gradual tanner. Testers found it best to apply product over the course of a couple days so the tan could gradually grow darker. Apply after you exfoliate in the shower and apply a thin layer of moisturiser. Overall, testers loved the shimmer it leaves behind and the price. Some found the smell inoffensive while

others found it strong. One con is the product tends to be runny and many testers would have preferred a pump. Still, this is a quality self-tanner for the money (€8).

Laura Mercier Bronzing Gel for the Face (Average Price)



Unlike other self-tanners, Laura Mercier's bronzing gel is meant to be used to enhance the tan on the face. The company suggests dabbing a bit on AFTER tinted moisturiser and BEFORE powders. A bit pricier than M.A.C. and other bronzers on the market, testers found it's well worth the price. This bronzer provides a "just tanned" look with a touch of rose. Warms the skin and adds a spark of shimmer (€25).

Clarins Radiance-Plus Self Tanning Cream-Gel for the Face (Steep)



The authors of "Total Beauty," gave this facial self tanner 8.13 points out of 10 -- the highest rating for all their tested self tanners. Why did they like it? It's light, has a pleasant smell and lasts a couple days (€42).

Jergens Natural Glow (Super Cheap)



This is my friend Deirdre's hands-down favourite self-tanner and she's tried dozens. She loves that it's gradual because she has super pale skin and one-application self-tanners tend to streak on her. She used this daily after her shower and while it does smell (testers found the smell overpowering and rated it poorly because of it), she deals with it. Deirdre loves to apply Palmer's Cocoa Butter Leg Gloss over it for added tan and extra glow. Jergens is only about €3.

Decleor Self-Tanning Milk and Gels for Body and Face (Average-to-Steep Price)



You'll find Decleor products to be one of the best and least pungent self tanners you'll try. Testers found the product to be almost perfect: Hydrating (cheaper tanners will dry skin out), non-streaking, natural, no orange colour and with a bit of shimmer. Like all self-tanners, Decleor products do smell. The tanning agents are 100 percent organic and are suitable for face as well as body (€24).

St. Tropez Whipped Bronze Self-Tanning Mousse for Face and Body (Steep)



This salon brand is beloved by celebs including Elle MacPherson. You apply this and within a few hours you'll have a deep, naturally-looking tan. This is not a gradual self-tanner. Because the product is fast-acting and dries fast, testers recommend using the pad that St. Tropez makes for their self-tanners. St. Tropez's website also features applications videos, which is recommended watching. The good news is that any missed patches are relatively easy to fix.

Testers found their tan deepened over 3 hours. Testers also found that Whipped Bronze has a more pleasant fragrance than other self-tanners they tried. Ideal for the entire body, including the face (€30).

Clarins Liquid Bronze Self-Tanner for the Face (Average Price)



The highest rated and most loved Clarins self-tanner. Reviewers raved about ease of use, didn't complain about the smell and said the product worked great on oily skin (€27).

Neutrogena Sun Fresh Sunless Foam (Cheap)



For an inexpensive self-tanner for the body, Neutrogena's Sun Fresh doesn't streak, dries quickly and allows for a buildable tan. If you have darker skin, you should opt for the medium/deep product because you may not notice a tan if you opt for the fair/medium (€9).

Tan Towel Self-Tanning Towelettes (Average Price)



Carry these in your purse or overnight bag and wipe onto legs and body for an instant tan (€19).

Question:

Why Do Self-Tanners Smell So Bad?

Answer:

Self-tanners contain a chemical called dihydroxyacetone (or DHA) which has an unpleasant odour. These days companies try to mask the DHA smell with essential oils, but every self-tanner tried has some sort of DHA odour, some stronger than others. Self-tanners tend to start smelling a couple hours after application. The combination of product with natural body heat makes the smell more obvious.

We have five tips for self-tanning your face and body:

Tip #1: Salon tans are your best bet

If you want a flawless, professional application and can afford the price, head to a spa or salon. For upward of €40, you can get one of many options: Full body exfoliation and professional application of self-tanner, airbrush bronzing (where an aesthetician sprays a fine mist of tanner over your entire body), or your least expensive option: spray tanning. You can step into a booth and get sprayed on all sides for about €10 a session or more.

Tip #2: How to use self-tanner on your face

This is a four-step process.

Step one:

Pull hair up in a ponytail before you start so you don't miss any parts. According to InStyle's May 2007 issue, makeup artist Scott Barnes once missed a spot on Jennifer Lopez's ear because he forgot to pull her hair up.

First, prep skin by gently cleansing and exfoliating. Skip moisturiser , which may interfere with the tanner.

Step two:

Apply under-eye cream. According to Barnes in InStyle, you want the colour of your skin to be lighter under the eyes, it makes you look younger.

Step three:

Blend a few drops of self-tanner and equal parts moisturiser in the palm of your hand then apply over face and neck. You only want to go one shade darker than your natural colour.

Step four:

Let colour develop for three hours then follow up with a sweep of bronzer on forehead, cheeks and nose: areas where the sun naturally shines.

Don't forget:

Smooth remaining tanner over earlobes and upper ears. Wash hands thoroughly. Don't skip the sunscreen.

Tip #3: How to self-tan your body

For this three-step process, start by exfoliating skin with a body scrub in the shower paying special attention to rough areas including knees and elbows (dry skin absorbs higher concentrations of tanner). Shave before you tan. Some beauticians suggests using a body oil, instead of shaving cream, when shaving.

A good tip is to rub Vaseline on cuticles and nails. This protects your manicure and keeps fingertips and nails from staining.

Apply tanner limb by limb, starting with your legs.

Apply over the shin and calf of a leg, sweeping tanner down over your ankle, foot and toes.

Then apply tanner to your thigh from front to back, using the excess to cover your knee.

Repeat on your other leg.

For the final step, apply tanner to your hips, stomach and torso, following with your shoulders and arms.

Wait 10 minutes to dry before dressing and avoid any excessive activity that will make you sweat for at least a few hours. If your tan hasn't set, sweat could cause streaking.

Bonus tips:

To remove tanner from palms, without washing off product from the tops of your hands, rub palms along a wet washcloth, making sure to get in between fingers.

Give arms, legs and décolletage a subtle glow with a body shimmer.

Tip #4: Pick the right tanner

There are several types of tanners: Tanners created just for the face, airbrush tanners, cream tans, bronzing gel, tinted tans and tan enhancers. There's body shimmer and bronzing powder. You can layer tanners as colours fade. How? Apply a lotion then follow with bronzing powder or shimmer. Just be careful not to go too dark.

Tip #5: So you messed up, uh-oh!

If you end up with a streaky tan, you can fix with an astringent toner or even toothpaste. Exfoliate to even out a patchy application. Not dark enough? Repeat the procedure. Just make sure you gave the tan enough time to develop.