

## Sawbones 411: Testicle Tanning

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**Clint:** *Sawbones* is a show about medical history, and nothing the hosts say should be taken as medical advice or opinion. It's for fun. Can't you just have fun for an hour and not try to diagnose your mystery boil? We think you've earned it. Just sit back, relax, and enjoy a moment of distraction from that weird growth. You're worth it.

[theme music plays]

**Justin:** Hello everybody, and welcome to *Sawbones*: a marital tour of misguided medicine. I'm your cohost, Justin McElroy.

**Sydnee:** And I'm Sydnee McElroy.

**Justin:** What are the odds, Syd?

**Sydnee:** That I have— that I'm Sydnee McElroy and you're Justin McElroy? What—

**Justin:** This is the first time we've ever tried recording with our children playing in the adjacent room.

**Sydnee:** Oh, yes.

**Justin:** What are the odds that we get through this recording?

**Sydnee:** Um... I'm not— I mean, not good. Like, I don't bet, but if I did bet, I'd bet against us.

**Justin:** Yeah!

**Sydnee:** [laughs]

**Justin:** I would bet against us too.

**Sydnee:** [through laughter] That sounded so grim.

**Justin:** You know who I'd never bet against, though?

**Sydnee:** Who?

**Justin:** Our listeners. They've always been there for us, and we need them now more than ever. Once a year, we come to you, our beloved friends, and say "Hey. Do you like what we make? You can maybe kick in a few bucks—"

**Sydnee:** To help us out.

**Justin:** "—to help us out in making it, making it possible to make it." That is what we are coming to you for. It's the Max Fun Drive! We do it once a year. We come to you and say "Hey, you like this stuff? Support it for just \$5 a month!" You can go to [Maximumfun.org/join](http://Maximumfun.org/join), pledge \$5 a month, and you're gonna get access to hundreds of hours of amazing bonus content. There's one where it's like— oh, this year it's you and Charlie answering kids' questions, right?

**Sydnee:** Yeah.

**Justin:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** No, it's a really fun one. Charlie reads the questions that our listeners have sent in from their— from children they know. [laughs quietly]

**Justin:** We—

**Sydnee:** Children they've met.

**Justin:** Local children. Um, we've done one where we walk through a drugstore and talk about all the products in there. We've done all kinds of fun ones. There's— there's great *Sawbones* stuff, great stuff from all the Max Fun shows.

**Sydnee:** And you get all the shows, not just ours.

**Justin:** Not just ours. And we're gonna tell you more about it during the episode, but don't wait for that. There's gifts and stuff. We'll tell you about 'em. But [Maximumfun.org/join](http://Maximumfun.org/join), 5 bucks a month, 10, 20, whatever you can do. It is really, really meaningful, and helps us to make our stuff. And we need you. So if you like this stuff, we really— we rely on you for support, so please, [Maximumfun.org/join](http://Maximumfun.org/join). Sydnee! What's up?

**Sydnee:** Well, Justin, I got a treat for you.

**Justin:** Can you say, um— I'm about to open this. When I do, can you say the—the [unintelligible].

**Sydnee:** Can I say what?

**Justin:** [mumbling] Grip it and rip it. 'Cause I don't normally open a soda on *Sawbones*?

**Sydnee:** Oh, okay.

**Justin:** And Griffin always tells me to grip it and rip it.

**Sydnee:** Alright.

**Justin:** Okay.

[soda can opening]

**Sydnee:** Grip it and rip it!

[fizzing]

**Justin:** That's good. Yeah.

**Sydnee:** Like that? Was I supposed to say it during it, or...

**Justin:** No, like, after.

**Sydnee:** Oh.

**Justin:** But it's like— the enthusiasm was, like, a little...

**Sydnee:** Oh, okay.

**Justin:** Next time.

**Sydnee:** Well, I wasn't excited, and I'm not very good at faking it.

**Justin:** Fair enough.

**Sydnee:** There was —that's honesty.

**Justin:** I love that.

**Sydnee:** Justin, um, I have— okay. We have talked about a lot of... *interesting* health practices on the show. And, uh, we did one episode on exposing your... perineum...

**Justin:** Taint.

**Sydnee:** ... to sunlight. For your wellness.

**Justin:** Yeah. Your wellbeing.

**Sydnee:** Yes.

**Justin:** Yes.

**Sydnee:** And I thought... "Well, that was weird."

**Justin:** Yes.

**Sydnee:** "People pro— that one won't hang around."

**Justin:** Anybody who listened to that ep thought, "That was weird."

**Sydnee:** [laughs]

**Justin:** "I don't know why that is a thing. Okay."

**Sydnee:** And then it seemed to go away. 'Cause as we talked about on that episode, it wasn't— it was sort of like a— I don't remember if it was Instagram or TikTok. It was one of the social medias that's cooler than— like, it came out after the point, like, I had peaked in my youthful coolness, and so it was one of the social medias that I'm not as good at, you know?

**Justin:** When was your youthful coolness, exactly?

**Sydnee:** [laughs] [through laughter] It was— you didn't— apparently it never happened.

**Justin:** I missed it.

**Sydnee:** You've known me since I was 12, so apparently it didn't—

**Justin:** [laughs]

**Sydnee:** —it never occurred, I guess is the... as cool as I was going to get, burnt out before this social media format.

Anyway, it was really just a handful of people, but it got a lot of press because... you know. Shining your down-there— sunshining your down-there is...

**Justin:** Sunshining your down-there is the technical term.

**Sydnee:** Right. It is—

**Justin:** I don't wanna get too far in the jargon, but sunshining your down-there.

**Sydnee:** Uh, but it's back. Not the same, though.

**Justin:** Oh no!

**Sydnee:** Not exactly the same. It's ba— it's— it's slightly tweaked. To bring it up to date for 2022, and to make it appealing to Tucker Carlson, it is now testicle tanning.

**Justin:** I don't have my taint tanning anymore. I don't have my button anymore. So we're just gonna have to rely on you saying [holding back laughter] testicle tanning. [wheeze]

**Sydnee:** Testicle tanning.

**Justin:** [high-pitched] Testicle tanning? [laughs]

**Sydnee:** Testicle tanning. Uh, so... why are we talking about testicle tanning? Well...

**Justin:** [shakily] I don't know, Syd. [wheeze-laughs]

**Sydnee:** 'Cause, I mean, why not, I guess? [laughs quietly] Why not? Um, the reason is that, uh, Tucker Carlson, who hosts a program... I don't—

**Justin:** Crosswire— *Crossfire* with Paul Begala.

**Sydnee:** [laughs] Is it? I— well, I'm hesitating to say "news."

**Justin:** It's called *Crossfire* without Paul Begala. That's the name of his show.

**Sydnee:** He talks on TV.

**Justin:** Yeah. It's an— he's an editorialist. [giggles] Like... [snorts loudly] like Dave Perry.

**Sydnee:** There we go. He— Tucker Carlson, who talks on television, is worried about the end of masculinity.

**Justin:** Yep, yep, yep. Yep. This is a problem.

**Sydnee:** Yeah. Well, aren't we all? Um, and he's doing a special documentary... I think it's a documentary? I don't know. Series of images with talking. [laughs quietly] About this problem. And he's called it *The End of Men*.

**Justin:** Phew, man. Sounds good, doesn't it? [wheezes]

**Sydnee:** And I will say—

**Justin:** [through laughter] Not too bad.

**Sydnee:** —by the way, um... 'cause I'm gonna tell you why he thinks men are ending, and what this has to do with tanning your testicles. But you've gotta watch the trailer for this. This documentary. It's wild. It's— the amount of images of, like, very muscular, sweaty, or wet, or...

**Justin:** [laughs]

**Sydnee:** ... half-dressed, or fully nude, or... I mean, just sort of—

**Justin:** A lot of beefcakes?

**Sydnee:** —glistening male bodies. Like, a lot of glistening male bodies.

**Justin:** Okay, yeah! Let's fetishize masculinity! That's great.

**Sydnee:** I'm just saying, it's there— I didn't put it there.

**Justin:** It's more like bear—

**Sydnee:** Tucker Carlson put it there.

**Justin:** It's more like *Bear Hunt with Tucker Carlson*.

**Sydnee:** It's—[laughs] it's— I'm just saying what it is! It's a very... I mean, it's very— I don't know if he's, like, hearkening back to some sort of, like... [sighs] like, Greek, like... sort of... which is also, like—

**Justin:** [simultaneously] Hmm. Yeah, when I think Tucker Carlson, I think hearkening back to the Greeks.

**Sydnee:** [laughs] No. Anyway, what— so, if you watch the trailer you'll see a lot of that. And, like, with a lot of— with people— I'm not gonna watch this show. But people are talking about how men are getting weaker, okay? They're, uh— they're not exercising enough, I guess? Something like that. Exercise seems to be a big part of it, I can tell. Um, that definitely that's a big part of it. And, like, getting sweaty and being hunky, and partial-to-full nudity.

Um, the thesis statement, it seems, as to why men are ending, is presented— and I've heard other people say this, which is... bizarre. But, um, the basic idea is that hard times— are you watching this trailer? I can see your—

**Justin:** [laughs]

**Sydnee:** —I can see the reflection in your glasses.

**Justin:** [through laughter] There's a shirtless guy firing a rifle!

**Sydnee:** I don't— I don't know. Uh, the basic thesis is that we have hard times in human history.

**Justin:** Uh-huh.

**Sydnee:** And then these hard times make strong men. Strong men. Hard times build strong men.

**Justin:** Hard time build strong men.

**Sydnee:** And then strong men fix hard times.

**Justin:** It's a cycle.

**Sydnee:** Because they're strong.

**Justin:** Hard me— hard men make hard times.

**Sydnee:** No, no. Hard times make strong men. Strong men fix hard times. Then—

**Justin:** Then strong— then strong men make new hard times for next men.  
[laughs quietly]

**Sydnee:** [laughs] Well, no. Then— then, because the strong men fix hard times, they make good times. But what do good times make?

**Justin:** Soft men.

**Sydnee:** Soft men.

**Justin:** It sounds like less— listen. As a soft man, I—

**Sydnee:** [laughs]

**Justin:** —really appreciate all the hard men, and the good fighting they did against all the bad people to let me get soft. I love it. How is it the end of men? It feels cyclical. [wheezes] To me.



**Sydnee:** Well, there's the soft men, and then we've got— the soft men will make more hard times, because they're not—

**Justin:** They're too soft.

**Sydnee:** —they're not... strong.

**Justin:** Okay.

**Sydnee:** And then we'll go back to hard times, and then we've got to get more strong men.

**Justin:** Okay.

**Sydnee:** Which I guess Tucker Carlson is gonna start with his documentary, maybe.

**Justin:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** Maybe he's bringing 'em back with this documentary. I would— just on a side note, the idea that there was a time where we fixed all the hard times, and everyone had it easy—

**Justin:** No matter what their skin color or gender?

**Sydnee:** Or anything other characteristic. Religion—

**Justin:** Yeah, you name it. Yeah.

**Sydnee:** Yeah, nation of origin, sexual orientation. The idea that everyone had it easy at some point, and those were the good times, I think is a little strange. Except that it's coming from Tucker Carlson, in which case it makes total sense. But, um— so because of this, we're here. We're stuck in the so— soft times. The hard times, with the soft—

**Justin:** Hmm, I wouldn't say I'm stuck. I'm lovin' it!

**Sydnee:** —with the weak men. Only Tucker Carlson can save us. And if you feel like I'm picking on you, men, this is not me. I do not say this. This is Tucker

Carlson, is talking about the men. Everyone else who's not man, we don't figure into any of this, of history, right?

**Justin:** Mm-hmm.

**Sydnee:** We're not really— we're just sort of along for the ride.

**Justin:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** With the hard and soft men. Um, he has lots of ideas. And again, I think it has a lot to do with exercising and physical fitness. 'Cause, like, if you watch the trailer, it sort of starts with, like, the strong, hard men are, like— they have JFK talking about, like, the beginnings of the Presidential physical fitness stuff. You know? Calisthenics and stuff like that.

**Justin:** Mm-hmm, which we've delved into, right? We did an episode about that.

**Sydnee:** Yeah, exactly. So, like, that was good, and now we're bad, is his thing. So, there— he brings on— he invited a guest, who is... [sighs heavily] an expert in physical fitness. Um... that's all I know. Like, a fitness professional? That is what he is.

**Justin:** Mm-hmm.

**Sydnee:** Those are his qualifications. Which, I mean, granted, I don't have those. Um, and his name is Andrew McGovern.

**Justin:** Okay.

**Sydnee:** And he comes on the show to talk about one approach to fixing this. And I guess he also probably does, like, normal physical fitness stuff. Like, lift a heavy thing, or run. You know, the things you do. Um, but he's also an expert in tackling another problem, sort of a... a testicle problem.

**Justin:** Hmm!

**Sydnee:** Um, because part of Tucker's main argument for why men are ending is that testosterone levels and sperm counts have been declining for a while now.

**Justin:** Okay.

**Sydnee:** Okay?

**Justin:** Okay, this is all adding up.

**Sydnee:** And this is— I think that this is when pseudoscience and fake medicine stuff gets particularly insidious, is when they include a grain of truth, and especially when they include a true statement that I don't— I mean, like, we don't have a great answer for why, right now. Like, that's the truth.

**Justin:** Mm-hmm.

**Sydnee:** Yes, testosterone levels— historically, testosterone levels and sperm counts appear to be declining. Not to, like, an extent that we're all freaking out about it. I mean, people are— sperms are still out there, and they're still making babies.

**Justin:** You're right.

**Sydnee:** Okay?

**Justin:** Yes.

**Sydnee:** But these things are decreasing. And we're not entirely sure, and Tucker and Andrew are very worried about that. Um, and like I said, in terms of, like, why this is happening, we don't really know. On a science note, um, I will say there is a lot of research being done in this area.

**Justin:** Hmm!

**Sydnee:** They've tried to, like, account for all these things with, like, does it have to do with certain health conditions that may be on the rise or decline? Does it have to do with—

**Justin:** [simultaneously] Is it laptops?

**Sydnee:** —weight, or smoking, or— you know, smoking actually increases testosterone.

**Justin:** Um...

**Sydnee:** 'Cause there was a thes— there was a theory, like, people used to smoke a lot, and now they don't smoke as much, 'cause smoking is so bad for you, and so testosterone levels were higher, because smoking makes it higher. Did you know that?

**Justin:** No, I did not know that.

**Sydnee:** Yeah. This is not— please don't start smoking.

**Justin:** Deal.

**Sydnee:** Um, and, like, environmental factors. Is it plastics, or is it pollutants? You know. Um, none of these things has given us an answer. None of these things, like, we've been able to find an exact causative relationship.

**Justin:** Maybe it's just all the great soft times.

**Sydnee:** [laughs] We've noticed that, like, average grip strengths have decreased over time.

**Justin:** Mm-hmm.

**Sydnee:** But then the question arises, do we need great grip strength?

**Justin:** Not right now. I wouldn't think.

**Sydnee:** So part of the equation is that, um, are we evolving in a direction that is more advantageous to survival in modern society?

**Justin:** 'Cause we don't need to be gripping things right now.

**Sydnee:** 'Cause we don't need to grip things as hard. Or— another thing is, they have found that when men live with people, like in— like with roommates, or if they're cohabitating with a partner, um, that they get more, like, good feeling hormones that are pro-social, and this could also lead to decreased testosterone. They're, like, converting more of the testosterone to other things. But the point is, like, maybe these pro-social hormones that make men get along with other people more, and less, like—

**Justin:** Punching... chemicals.

**Sydnee:** —less punchy, yeah.

**Justin:** Less punching chemicals.

**Sydnee:** Like, isn't this advantageous in many ways—

**Justin:** Perhaps.

**Sydnee:** —to society today? Do we really need... a bunch of people who are really good at punching and gripping?

**Justin:** Um... I'm gonna say no, except maybe football? They have to... grip?

**Sydnee:** There is no punching in football. [laughs]

**Justin:** I love that line. That classic Tom Hanks line. "There's no punching in football!"

**Sydnee:** In fact, there's no gripping in football. That's... that's not okay, either. You can't, like, grab— you can't grab 'em. You can kind of hug 'em.

**Justin:** You gotta grip the football.

**Sydnee:** Anyway. People— men— men are living with their spouses longer before marriage. They're delaying kids. They're doing less manual labor on average in general. There are things that would account for— like, if you look at things from an anthropologic standpoint, there are things that may account for this, and it's not necessarily something we all need to be... freaking out about. Is it something we should be paying attention to? Yes, of course. When we see these sorts of changes over time, we do need to monitor them and make sure— is it something in the environment? Is it something health-related that is going to be damaging to people, to their health, to their happiness, to their wellbeing? Obviously you need to.

Um, but do we need to do— do we need to have Tucker Carlson doing a documentary on it?

**Justin:** No!

**Sydnee:** Certainly not. Do we need—

**Justin:** No. Obviously, no!

**Sydnee:** No. And do we need to frame it as this decline of masculinity that is dangerous to a family structure, a social structure... you know what I mean? I mean, he's loaded it with a political agenda of what a man is, by Tucker Carlson's definition.

**Justin:** Which is, all kidding aside, poisonous.

**Sydnee:** It is. It is. It's a very— I would say it's a very dangerous perspective, to put on a science issue. Um... so anyway. So, is it a problem? Is it evolution? I— why is it happening? We don't know. Um, but one way or another... we definitely— Andrew and Tucker can agree, we definitely think that tanning the scrotum is part of how we solve it.

**Justin:** Okay.

**Sydnee:** Okay?

**Justin:** Okay.

**Sydnee:** So I'm gonna tell you, Justin, how to tan your scrotum. But f—[laughs] but first...

**Justin:** No, no, no! Let me stop you right there, Sydnee. You don't need to go to the billing department. 'Cause today, in lieu of ads, we are just gonna tell you about the Maximum Fun Drive.

**Sydnee:** Let's do it.

**Justin:** Okay. Well, this is a— a network that is special, I think, in that it is funded by you, our beloved listeners. Yes, we do run the occasional ad, but the bulk of our funding comes from you, the people who listen to this. Just by pledging \$5, \$10, \$20 a month and all working together, you help keep the Max Fun content train a-rollin' on the content tracks.

**Sydnee:** Yeah. You help us, um, upgrade our equipment, make sure that we're creating a show that you'll enjoy. Uh, you help with the research that I'm able to do, and materials that I find, books that we buy to find these strange medical tidbits for you. All of these things your donations help support.

**Justin:** Microphones, uh, internet. Our— well, I mean, our house and clothes for our kids. You know, stuff that you need money for, um, you all very kindly help us do that. And we want to say thank you. So, this year, we covered that for \$5 a month you get the, uh— the bonus content. There's over 350 hours of it. It is a dizzying amount of stuff for you to listen to.

**Sydnee:** Don't listen to it all in one sitting. Like, take breaks.

**Justin:** Travis figured it out. I think it'd be about 15 days to listen to all of it.

**Sydnee:** Oh, but then after those 15 days you're through it. So don't do that. Spread it out.

**Justin:** Uh, at \$10 a month, if you can pledge \$10 a month, cancel some dumb streaming service, cancel... Acorn, or something like that. Something goofy.

**Sydnee:** Acorn is kind of cool.

**Justin:** BoCo—

**Sydnee:** [laughs]

**Justin:** —plus a letterpress Max Fun membership card, and one of 35 embroidered patches designed by Maret Bondorew from Frog and Toad press. These things are precious. They're adorable. They're patches. There's one for all our shows. You can choose one that you like. Ours is very cute. It's got a syringe embe— you can see it on the website. Go to [Maximumfun.org/join](http://Maximumfun.org/join).

**Sydnee:** Get a patch. Put it on your bag, put it on your denim jacket.

**Justin:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** Wherever you want to put it.

**Justin:** \$20 a month. You got \$20 a month? Gosh, that's nice. You get everything above, plus your choice of either the Max Fun creativity pack, which has an inspiration deck— I think I put a recipe in there for, like, the best snack mix basically ever. There's 54 cards— this inspiration deck is 54 cards, illustrated by Ellen VanderMyde featuring activity suggestions from me and the other Max Fun hosts. There's three postcards. There's some modeling clay, a custom black wing pencil, or you can get an embroidered rocket hat if you don't wanna make anything, you just wanna keep your head warm. That's an option for you, too.

**Sydnee:** It's an important place. You lose a lot of heat through the top of your head.

**Justin:** \$35 a month we got a messenger bag and all the other stuff that we previously mentioned. But that's not really the important thing. The important thing is you're voting. You're saying, "Hey, I like this. I want it to keep happening."

Um, we do a lot of stuff, and our kids do a lot of stuff, and it is hard to find the time sometimes to make show happen. But we do it, because we know it means a lot to people, and it helps us to spread the word about, like, the educational efforts that *Sawbones* is doing by keeping the show going. And we feel like— if I don't— I mean, mainly Sydnee— but, like, we've done some good stuff, you know, education-wise over the past couple years. Um, and you—

**Sydnee:** Which I know, because of you wonderful listeners and all the wonderful emails you send to tell me that I have been able to— and Justin— help in some small way.

**Justin:** [laughs quietly]

**Sydnee:** Um, with dispelling misinformation, or making you feel a little more comfortable with the healthcare system as a whole.

**Justin:** And you're a part of that. We're all in it together. If you can go to [Maximumfun.org/join](https://Maximumfun.org/join). Uh, if you can't upgrade this year, you know, maybe you're already a donor and you can't upgrade to the next level, which does get you all the gifts, which is fantastic, uh, you can also boost, which is just, like, bumping it up a little bit. If you want to bump it up a few bucks, can't go to the next level but you still want to do a little bit more, you can absolutely do that. That helps



counts towards our goal, and we really, really appreciate it. Please, go to [Maximumfun.org/join](http://Maximumfun.org/join) and, uh, get— get on board. We really thank you.

**Sydnee:** Thank you. It means so much to us. We really appreciate.

**Justin:** You know what means a lot to me, Sydnee?

**Sydnee:** What's that?

**Justin:** Fixing this gosh darn masculinity problem.

**Sydnee:** [sighs heavily] Right. And I should say, I've— I'm using the language of this documentary, and Tucker Carlson's special, and Andrew McGovern, and all this. They don't say it. They're talking about... cis men, largely is what this is focused on.

**Justin:** Yeah...

**Sydnee:** I should make that clear. That they're— that is their target audience, are cis men who may be concerned about their own... manliness.

**Justin:** [snorts] Yes.

**Sydnee:** Right? Um, so anyway, Andrew McGovern says what you need to do is expose your testicles to, um, light. Now... tanning is an option. That's where testicle tanning— Tucker Carlson actually is the one who says that repeatedly, I believe. Testicle tanning. It's catchy. Um, alliteration, you know?

But what he's also saying is you could use infrared light.

**Justin:** Oh, okay.

**Sydnee:** Which is why I believe I saw the expression on your face as you were watching that trailer, of the man standing triumphantly on the top of a hill, completely naked, with an infrared light just sort of shining...

**Justin:** It on his... can we say—

**Sydnee:** On his down-there.

**Justin:** [very quietly] B— balls?

**Sydnee:** His front butt.

**Justin:** His front butt, okay.

**Sydnee:** [laughs] His— his genitals.

**Justin:** You get it!

**Sydnee:** He's shining a red light on his genitals.

**Justin:** You get it.

**Sydnee:** Triumphantly. It's a very triumphant— it's a power pose, I would say.

**Justin:** Um... [laughs quietly] yeah, he is very proud of it.

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm. Um, and this is— some of this is— if you remember when we did the episode on tanning your perineum, it's a similar sort of idea, um, that they were talking about. A couple different things will happen.

One, um, red light supposedly— or red light can— I mean, some— again, there's some science in here, and that can make it confusing. 'Cause then you go, "Well, that's true. So is all of it true?"

Um, the mitochondria in your cells can produce more ATP, which helps the Leydig cells in the testicles produce testosterone. Those are the cells that make testosterone, so you make more energy for the cells. You power up the powerhouse of the cell with the red light. It makes more testosterone. Boom, you've fixed it. You've fixed the testosterone problem. Um, there's also, similar to the perineum tanning... I'm trying not to say the other T word. It's just... anyway.

Similar to that, um, the thought is Vitamin D. Part of the problem, part of why we're all weak and soft now is because we need Vitamin D. And we have talked about again on the show, Vitamin D levels are low in quite a few people. And you should get that replaced, if it's low.

Um, but... why— the solution doesn't need to be tanning...

**Justin:** Your...

**Sydnee:** ... testicles, or your perineum. Um, the issues with that are— well, first of all, okay. When you get light— when you get—[laughs quietly] whether it's sunlight or infrared light, whatever, you're not penetrating your organs.

**Justin:** Ahh.

**Sydnee:** Like, it doesn't go that deep.

**Justin:** As we covered during, um— during the coronavirus pandemic, injecting light is not necessarily something that we have mastered yet.

**Sydnee:** No. You can't inject... sunlight... or any UV light, or infrared light, whatever light... into you? I feel like this doesn't need to be said. But it doesn't penetrate to your internal organs, so how would it stimulate cells in your testicles to make testosterone if it can't penetrate your... testicles?

**Justin:** Uh, it wouldn't?

**Sydnee:** Right. So that doesn't—

**Justin:** Oh, okay, good! Like, I got it. I got it in one.

**Sydnee:** So that doesn't really make any sense. And then again with the Vitamin D, you know, the issue is simply... yes, um, exposing your skin to sunlight will help to create active Vitamin D. Like, it helps with the final enzyme— the reaction that makes Vitamin D. That is true.

Um, it happens anywhere. It doesn't need to be your genitals.

**Justin:** Right.

**Sydnee:** It would not, like, especially Vitamin D power your genitals.

**Justin:** In much the same way that, um... if you have, like, knee pain, you don't have to crush up the ibuprofen and rub it on your knees. You can just swallow the pill.

**Sydnee:** Yes.

**Justin:** And it knows where to go from there.

**Sydnee:** Yes. Or if you have an infection in your toe and your doctor says you need an antibiotic, the doctor doesn't... dip your toe in antibiotic.

**Justin:** Right.

**Sydnee:** You just take the antibiotic.

**Justin:** 'Cause the body's a system.

**Sydnee:** Right.

**Justin:** Got it.

**Sydnee:** So, um... you could also, like, because there are risks of sun exposure, as we've talked about on the show many times, you could also take a supplement if you need Vitamin D. Which if it's low enough, you should talk to your doctor about taking a supplement. Um, or you could increase Vitamin D rich foods in your diet. You could ask about some foods that you could eat, you know, if you prefer to do it that way.

But, um, there is no reason to tan your...

**Justin:** Bathing suit area.

**Sydnee:** Yes. Um, he calls this, by the way... a bromeopathic solution.

[pause]

**Justin:** [quietly] Shh, don't say anything. This is the peak. This is the pinnacle, Sydnee. I need to treasure it. Okay. Okay. [sighs] I'm ready to move on. Say it again.

**Sydnee:** Bromeopathic?

**Justin:** [high pitched wheezing]

**Sydnee:** So, I mean, you know, as opposed to—

**Justin:** [snort-laughs] [claps]

**Sydnee:** It's like homeopathic—

**Justin:** [laughs loudly] [high pitched, through laughter] That's the funniest thing— that's the fun— I'll never top it! I'll never top it! I'll never top it. I'll never say anything funnier than bromeopa—[wheezes and laughs loudly]

**Sydnee:** Um... bromeopathic, 'cause it's—

**Justin:** [laughs loudly]

**Sydnee:** It's homeopathic, but for bros, you see.

**Justin:** Oh, I got it, baby! I'm lovin' it over here! This side of the table needs no more explanation. I am fully dialed in.

**Sydnee:** So...

**Justin:** [laughs loudly]

**Sydnee:** So you can— I mean... [sighs] anyway. Are there any studies on tanning your testicles, or exposing your testicles to infrared light? There have been studies on the idea of, like, red light therapy, infrared light therapy. And, like, there have been little small studies that have suggested, like, well, maybe does it do something to tissues in turn of wound healing or, like, easing pain?

You've seen devices like this. There are things out there for, like, arthritis or muscle aches, those kinds of things. Um, and they're not— again, they're not completely made up. There were some studies that suggested, well, maybe something is happening. Um, but they're areas where we could do, like, more research that would actually tell us if something works or not. There is no definitive thought that yes, this red light does anything. And certainly, no evidence that it definitely increases testosterone levels, or sperm counts, in any way.

Um, and that's also, like, a wild thing to... I mean, are sperm counts decreasing to a point where we're worried about people who desire to have children not

being able to? That is not necessarily been proven at all. Um, there's lots of sperms in there. Anyway... [laughs quietly]

Uh, there are a lot of people who've tried this, and that's really what they rely on. Some things never change.

**Justin:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** Testimonials.

**Justin:** Yeah, anecdotal evidence from people who have tanned their down-there.

**Sydnee:** Testicle...

**Justin:** Testiclemoni—

**Sydnee:** ... monials.

**Justin:** No, we'll figure it out.

**Sydnee:** No. It's not bromeopathic.

**Justin:** Nothing can be. That's the peak.

**Sydnee:** Bromeopathy.

**Justin:** Bromeopathy.

**Sydnee:** Yeah. Um, we don't have any studies in humans. They've done some stuff in test tubes, and animals, and they have testimonials, and they will claim that that's enough. But this is all— this is with any... Tucker Carlson did not invent this. Neither did fitness expert Andrew McGovern. This... a tale as old as time. You get some people to try it out. They think it works because... placebo effect—

**Justin:** [simultaneously] 'Cause if it didn't— 'cause if it—

**Sydnee:** —or they got better anyway, or they're nice.

**Justin:** Talk about temptation on a placebo effect. If you just spent the afternoon, uh, suntanning your balls [wheeze-laughs] and it didn't do anything...

you have massive stakes in this. You have massive stakes that it did do something. You need it to have done *something*.

**Sydnee:** Um, and obviously Tucker Carlson believes strongly in it. It's great. In the segment where he brought on this expert to talk about testicle tanning— so, he basically says, "If— who cares, I mean, about the evidence. Like, people say it works, and is it any wilder than any of the other things people do? And if nobody else knows, why don't we just all try it? Why do we think that's so crazy?"

Like, that's sort of his perspective. And then the next guest who comes on his show that day is Kid Rock.

**Justin:** [laughs loudly]

**Sydnee:** And he's like, "Don't you think, Kid Rock, that we should try this?"

And even Kid Rock, who...

**Justin:** Yeah, don't... yeah.

**Sydnee:** Yeah, don't get me started. But even Kid Rock is like, "Ah... no— no? No. I don't think so."

Like, it's a bridge too far for Kid Rock.

**Justin:** For Kid Rock! For Kid Rock. [pause] For Kid Rock.

**Sydnee:** Kid Rock said "No... " to the testicle tanning.

**Justin:** I think we need— if I remember the exact quote, he said, "Well, Tucker, uh, even though you might have guessed from my image that I would be open to all sorts of different pathways to health, I believe that evidence-based medicine must be practiced, and we should rely on the expert opinions of physicians and other healthcare professionals before trying any treatments ourselves.'

**Sydnee:** No. That is not at all what he said. I think it was more just like...  
hmm...

**Justin:** "Nah." [laughs quietly]

**Sydnee:** "I haven't ever heard anything like that. What'll they come up with next? I don't—" he basically said, like, "Some days I just wanna get off this planet."  
[laughs]

**Justin:** Great.

**Sydnee:** Some— some days— hold on. Some days—

**Justin:** [simultaneously] Hey— hey, Kid Rock? Hey, Kid Rock?

**Sydnee:** —I just want this planet to stop and let me off. I just want to stop this planet and let me off. Those were his exact words. [laughs]

**Justin:** Hey, Kid Rock? Uh, I think some of us also agree with that exact sentiment, uh, vis-a-vis, [wheeze] letting Kid Rock off the planet.

**Sydnee:** But, uh— so anyway, that— there it is. And obviously everybody went wild about this. Um, because...

**Justin:** Well, okay. Let's talk about this. Let's talk about it. Because— be— uh, because we have— we have— I don't wanna... [sighs] Tucker Carlson and people like him are not— they're bad actors.

**Sydnee:** Yes.

**Justin:** And I mean that in the sense that... you are not— if you are someone who believes in science and believes in, like, evidence-based medicine, and believes in all this stuff, you— he knows what he's doing, folks. Like, this is— this is... supposed to be something that makes you mad, and is something that gets propagated.

**Sydnee:** Yes.

**Justin:** Like, this is— I mean, do I think he, like, knows exactly how ludicrous this is? Probably not. But do— is it part of the show? Absolutely.

**Sydnee:** It is. It is. Obviously he— somebody, someone who worked on his research team found this guy and was like, "Yeah, this is gonna— we've gotta get this on."



Uh, because— I mean, for nothing else, the image of the naked guy tanning his testicles on top of the mountain—

**Justin:** They don't look at that and think, "Oh, that's good and normal." Like... it's trying to get a reaction.

**Sydnee:** But... you know, the thing is, it does a lot of harm to people who do have low testosterone and are seeking treatment for that. Um, because the thing is, like—

**Justin:** Or low T, as they call it in commercials, just to keep you from having to admit that you have low testo— "Oh, me? No, no. Low T."

**Sydnee:** Well, but even that— see, it's another way of shaming— of tying the idea that if you're— if the hormone testosterone in your body is lower, and you're a cis man, then you are not really. You're not a, quote, "real man," and you need to go— like, you can't even say it. We can't even admit it. We can't even talk about it openly, because it's so shameful.

**Justin:** Right.

**Sydnee:** Instead of just saying, "Oh, your testosterone levels are low," as if your Vitamin D levels were low, or your Vitamin B12 levels— whatever. This thing in your body is low. Your Synthroid is low— er, your, I mean, your— Anyway, the point is, it's just a thing. It's a medical condition. If you're— if you're feeling— if you're concerned about it, if you're feeling tired and your sex drive is lower than it used to be, and, you know, certainly if you're having any other issues with erections or libido, you should talk to your doctor about it, and it could be testosterone, and you can go on replacement, and that's fine. And there's nothing embarrassing or shameful about any of that. But it also has nothing to do with the decline of Tucker Carlson's weird toxic—

**Justin:** Ideal of what— yeah.

**Sydnee:** —alpha male... weak man, strong man, soft world, hard world, I don't know what it is, thing. That has to do with throwing around medicine balls and being naked a lot.

**Justin:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** I mean, if you wanna be naked and throw around medicine balls, you go for it. I have no problem with that.

**Justin:** By all means, yeah.

**Sydnee:** But, like, that... that... is beyond gender. That applies to any gender that wants to be naked and throw around medicine balls. [laughs quietly]

**Justin:** What about the danger of skin cancer, Sydnee?

**Sydnee:** Well, I of course would advise that you wear, you know, your sun cream. Wear your suntan lotion.

**Justin:** On your— so, wait. I'm gonna put another protective barrier between my balls and this healing light?

**Sydnee:** Well, Justin, if— okay. Testosterone levels and sperm counts have only been declining in more recent decades, okay?

**Justin:** Okay.

**Sydnee:** Do we really think that, like, underwear, or pants, or shorts, or literally any covering of our genitals were only invented in the last... let's say hundred years, even?

**Justin:** No.

**Sydnee:** No, I think they had pants longer ago than that. So if any of this was a problem...

**Justin:** Right. I'm saying... is what they're doing dangerous because they're not putting sunscreen on their balls?

**Sydnee:** Oh, well, yeah. I mean, yeah, if you're getting— please don't burn your... testicles. I'm trying really hard not to use—[laughs]

**Justin:** It's not a bad word.

**Sydnee:** Well, it's not a *bad* word—

**Justin:** I don't know why you're so skittish.

**Sydnee:** —but I'm trying to be the scientific one.

**Justin:** Oh, okay.

**Sydnee:** No. But, like, no, obviously you shouldn't— no. You should— if you're going to expose your skin to the sunlight, you need to be very careful, wear sunscreen, and not get sunburnt. Um...

**Justin:** Probably— if your balls are like most balls—

**Sydnee:** ... anywhere. Any part of your body.

**Justin:** —they haven't seen much sun at all. So you— it's not ready for that kind of intensity.

**Sydnee:** No, it's the same thing we talked about in the perineum tanning episode. Like, that would be a really painful sunburn! Don't do that!

**Justin:** Whew!

**Sydnee:** Don't do that!

**Justin:** Whew!

**Sydnee:** Don't do that. Don't do this. Don't do this. First of all, don't listen to Tucker Carlson. And secondly, don't listen to Kid Rock, even though I actually do agree with him on this one thing.

**Justin:** I'm sure you guys would have a lot of common ground if you spent a little time together.

**Sydnee:** Mm, I can't— mm, no. Uh, don't— don't do this. If you're concerned about your testosterone levels or your sperm counts... go talk to your doctor. Go— go— you know, there's nothing to be ashamed, embarrassed of, and certainly this won't help you. It, as you said, it could hurt you if you get a burn. And at the very least it's just bad advice, and it propagates bad ideas and bad stereotypes that are harmful to people of all genders.

**Justin:** Thank you so much for listening. Um, I wanna ask one more time, if you can go to [Maximumfun.org/join](http://Maximumfun.org/join) and pledge \$5, \$10 a month, it really would be a big help. We only do this for just two episodes a year, where we stop the show and kind of ask you for your support, and I'm asking for it now. If you've never donated before and you like what we make, come on board. If you think you can do a little bit more, maybe you started listening to some new shows, whatever, [Maximumfun.org/join](http://Maximumfun.org/join). We will take any help we can get. Um, so please, please, please.

**Sydnee:** And thank you so much, if you're already a member. Thank you. We appreciate you. We are beyond grateful for all you do to help us do this.

**Justin:** Thanks to Rachel Jacobs, our editor, who we are able to compensate due to your generous contributions, which makes getting the show out the door about a bajillion times easier. So, thank you again to Rachel, and thank you to you. Um, [Maximumfun.org/join](http://Maximumfun.org/join)!

Thanks to The Taxpayers for the use of their— our theme song, "Medicines", which we play at the intro and outro of our program, and thank you so much to you for listening. That's gonna do it for us, so until next time, my name is Justin McElroy.

**Sydnee:** I'm Sydnee McElroy.

**Justin:** And, as always, don't drill a hole in your head.

[theme music plays]

[chord]

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