

The Truth About Tanning Beds

A Fact Sheet from the Maryland Skin Cancer Prevention Program



- On an average day in the United States more than 1 million people visit tanning salons. The indoor tanning industry's estimated annual revenue is \$5 billion. ¹
- Tanning beds emit dangerous ultraviolet (UV) radiation and are linked to skin cancer.
- Indoor tanning lamps emit UVA and UVB radiation at levels that can be as much as 15 times stronger than the sun. ²
- UV radiation, both from natural and artificial sources, such as tanning beds and sun lamps, has been classified by the US Department of Health and Human Services as a known carcinogen (cancer causing agent). ³
- Research has shown that exposure to UVA radiation is associated with an increased risk for basal cell carcinoma and squamous cell carcinoma, the two most common types of skin cancer. ⁴
- A Swedish study presents strong evidence that indoor tanning increases the risk of the most dangerous type of skin cancer, melanoma, especially when tanning bed use begins at an early age. ⁵
- A 2002 study demonstrated that the percentage of girls reporting using tanning beds doubled from the ages of 14 to 15 and then doubled again to 35% by the age of 17. ⁶
- The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends that no person under 18 should use a tanning bed. ⁷
- The International Agency for Research on Cancer (part of the WHO) has concluded that there is a clear increase in melanoma risk associated with use of tanning beds in the teens and twenties. ⁸
- The annual incidence of melanoma increased among Caucasian women in the United States aged 15-39 by 50% between 1980 and 2004. ⁹
- UV radiation from tanning beds can also have a damaging effect on the immune system and cause premature aging of the skin, giving it a wrinkled, leathery appearance.
- There is no such thing as a safe tan. A tan is the skin's response to injury.
- Cosmetic tanners (sprays and lotions) are safe alternatives to the sun and tanning beds. Remember to use sunscreen also.
- As of October 1, 2008 minors will need in-person parental consent to use a tanning facility.
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