

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 all three major types of 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
- The annual incidence of melanoma increased by 50% among Caucasian women in the United States aged 15-39 between 1980 and 2004. Melanoma is now the most common form of cancer for white women between the ages of 15 and 29⁴
- Research has demonstrated that as many as 40% of white 16 to 18 year-old girls have been indoor tanning bed users. ⁵
- A recent study determined that for young people diagnosed with melanoma between the ages of 18 and 29 years old, 76% of melanomas were attributable to tanning bed use. ⁶
- The World Health Organization (WHO) elevated tanning beds to its highest risk category (Category 1) along with asbestos, arsenic and tobacco smoke and 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 75% increase in melanoma risk associated with use of tanning beds before age 30. ⁸
- 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, if you use these products and then will be in the sun, you still need to use sunscreen.
- Since October 1, 2008 minors need in-person parental consent to use a tanning facility in Maryland.
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