

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) elevated tanning beds to its highest risk category (Category 1) in 2009 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 35. 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, if you use these products and then will be in the sun, you still need to use sunscreen.
- As of October 1, 2008 minors need in-person parental consent to use a tanning facility in Maryland.
- The Maryland Skin Cancer Prevention Program works to increase skin cancer awareness, provide skin cancer prevention education and promote sun safe and early detection behaviors to the citizens of Maryland.

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