

TerranearPMC Safety Share

Week of September 2, 2013 – Indoor Tanning

Labor Day marks the unofficial end of summer and while the hours of sun are still tipped in daylight's favor, many of us are back to work and this means that visiting the beach or just lounging around by the pool has been curtailed as we get back into our regular routines. Nevertheless, for many, especially young females (according to statistics), maintaining that tan remains a priority. So while the sun may not be as available during the waning days of fall and winter, many are going to tanning booths to keep that copper tone from fading.

Using a tanning bed, booth, or sunlamp to get tan is called "indoor tanning." Indoor tanning has been linked with skin cancers including melanoma (the deadliest type of skin cancer), squamous cell carcinoma (outer skin layer cells), and cancers of the eye (ocular melanoma). Last year there was a story that made front page headlines about a New Jersey woman that used tanning booths to such an extreme that her complexion made her look like an overcooked steak. She was also accused of placing her 5-year old daughter into tanning booths. The uproar prompted not just tanning salons in her community to ban her from frequenting their establishments, but became the impetus to initiate age limits on using indoor tanning salons.

Indoor tanning exposes users to both UV-A and UV-B rays, which damage the skin and can lead to cancer (ultra violet or UV light is classified into three levels; UVA, UVB and UVC, with A having the largest wavelength and C being the smallest and therefore, most intense; however UVC is blocked in the Earth's atmosphere in the ozone layer and therefore, does not become a health hazard). UVB and UVA acts differently upon human skin and therefore, produces different health consequences. UVB rays are mostly responsible for most cases of sunburn, as they are shorter than UVA rays and only reach the surface of the skin that is made up of the epidermis layer. The UVB radiation is absorbed by the stratum corneum on the epidermis surface. This stratum corneum is the dead cells layer - the visible layer of the skin. The damage caused by UVA is deeper, as these rays are longer than the UVB. They are responsible for causing the skin to lose its elasticity and wrinkling, leading to premature aging of the skin. They also can burn the skin, but at a deeper level than UVB.

Because tanning booths create both UVA and UVB rays, there is a hazard risk to skin cancer due to using such equipment, resulting in both malignant and benign cancerous forms. In the malignant type of cancer tumors may appear as a consequence of abnormal proliferating skin cells. The uncontrollable growing of these cells leads to melanoma tumor forming, which in most of the cases is lethal. Using a tanning bed is particularly dangerous for younger users; people who begin tanning younger than age 35 have a 75% higher risk of melanoma. Using tanning beds also increases the risk of wrinkles and eye damage, and changes skin texture.

One current myth about tanning booths is that this is a safer way to get a tan than from the sun. The fact is both Indoor tanning and tanning outside are both dangerous. Although tanning beds operate on a timer, the exposure to UV rays can vary based on the age and type of light bulbs.

You can still get a burn from tanning indoors. Tanning beds cause about 1,800 injuries requiring visits to the emergency room every year.

Many people have the attitude that they can use a tanning bed to get a base tan, which will provide protection from getting sunburned. The fact is, a tan is a response to injury and is an indication that the skin is being damaged. Skin cells respond to damage from UV rays by producing more pigment.

Many people rationalize that indoor tanning is a safe way to get vitamin D, which prevents many health problems. Yes, vitamin D is important for bone health, but studies showing links between vitamin D and other health conditions are inconsistent. Although it is important to get enough vitamin D, the safest way is through diet or supplements; while the amount of time spent tanning to get enough vitamin D varies from person to person.

According to the 2010 National Health Interview Survey, indoor tanners tended to be young, non-Hispanic white women.

- 32% of non-Hispanic white women aged 18–21 years reported indoor tanning. Those who reported indoor tanning device use reported an average of 28 sessions in the past year.
- Among non-Hispanic white adults who used an indoor tanning device in the past year, 58% of women and 40% of men used one 10 times or more in the past year.
- Non-Hispanic white women between the ages of 18 and 21 years residing in the Midwest (44%) and non-Hispanic white women between the ages of 22 and 25 old in the South (36%) were most likely to use indoor tanning devices

In addition, many of these women that use tanning booths are still in high school. So a lot of young women use tanning booths to maintain that health skin color. According to the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), tanning is especially hazardous to young people as those who use indoor tanning before age 30 increase their lifetime risk of melanoma, the deadliest form of skin cancer, by 75 percent. Melanoma will kill an estimated 8,650 people in the US this year alone, including an additional 2500 Americans that develop squamous cell carcinoma.

Throughout the United States, laws are being introduced that are designed to control the use of indoor tanning salons. Recently, Texas has banned children under age 16 from indoor tanning and requiring in-person parental consent for everyone under 18. In Delaware, a recently passed law prohibits those under 14 from tanning facilities unless they have a doctor's prescription and requires those under 18 to have a parent or guardian sign a consent form in the presence of a tanning facility operator. Many other states are joining in this battle to protect young people from possible health problems associated with indoor tanning and range from use restrictions to educational awareness programs.

Health is a relationship between you and your body

Terri Guillemets (U.S. quotation anthologist ...sounds good!)