

CANADIAN DERMATOLOGY ASSOCIATION POSITION STATEMENT THE USE OF ARTIFICIAL TANNING EQUIPMENT

The Canadian Dermatology Association opposes the use of tanning beds. In 2009, the International Agency for Research on Cancer, the cancer division of the World Health Organization, classified tanning beds as "carcinogenic to humans" — the agency's highest cancer-risk category similar to smoking.

Doses of UV from a tanning bed may be up to five times more potent than sunlight. This means that 20 minutes spent in a tanning device could be equivalent to hours in the sun. Regular use of tanning beds may cause photoaging of the skin; however, more importantly, one single exposure of indoor tanning increases an individual's risk of developing melanoma, the deadliest form of skin cancer, by up to 23%.

Ultraviolet (UV) radiation, from sunlight exposure or from exposure to an artificial source, can damage the DNA in skin cells which can lead to cancer formation, and at the same time, cause other mutations that can affect the ability of cells to repair UV-induced DNA damage. UV radiation, whatever the source, is a carcinogen, able to cause skin cancer. This can result in disfigurement from the treatment of skin cancers (basal cell carcinoma, squamous cell carcinoma and melanoma), premature death if a melanoma is not detected and treated early, as well as substantial health care costs for treating and monitoring skin cancer patients.

Exposure to UV B radiation, either from the sun or from an artificial source, can produce vitamin D in the skin. However, willingly increasing exposure to ultraviolet radiation for this purpose is not required nor recommended. There are other, safer ways to ensure sufficient vitamin D levels.

With over 75,000 new cases of skin cancer annually, the Canadian Dermatology Association encourages governments at all levels to pass legislation regulating the use of artificial tanning equipment. All provinces now have legislation in place banning the use of tanning beds by minors. The Canadian Dermatology Association promotes and participates in efforts to increase public awareness of the hazards of artificial tanning through schools, governments and health professionals.

References:

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