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CDC - Indoor Tanning - Skin Cancer



Using a tanning bed, booth, or sunlamp to get tan is called *indoor tanning*. Indoor tanning can cause skin cancers including melanoma (the deadliest type of skin cancer), basal cell carcinoma, and squamous cell carcinoma. Exposure to ultraviolet (UV) radiation also can cause cataracts and cancers of the eye (ocular melanoma).

Dangers of Indoor Tanning

Indoor tanning exposes users to two types of UV rays, UVA and UVB, which damage the skin and can lead to cancer. Indoor tanning is particularly dangerous for younger users; people who begin indoor tanning during adolescence or early adulthood have a higher risk of getting melanoma. This may be due to greater use of indoor tanning among those who begin tanning at earlier ages.

Every time you tan you increase your risk of getting skin cancer, including melanoma. Indoor tanning also—

- Causes premature skin aging, like wrinkles and age spots.
- Changes your skin texture.
- Increases the risk of potentially blinding eye diseases, if eye

protection is not used.

Facts About Indoor Tanning

Tanning indoors is not safer than tanning in the sun.

Indoor tanning and tanning outside are both dangerous. Although indoor tanning devices operate on a timer, the exposure to UV rays can vary based on the age and type of light bulbs. Indoor tanning is designed to give you high levels of UV radiation in a short time. You can get a burn from tanning indoors, and even a tan indicates damage to your skin.

A base tan is not a safe tan.

A tan is the body's response to injury from UV rays. A base tan does little to protect you from future damage to your skin caused by UV exposure. In fact, people who indoor tan are more likely to report getting sunburned.

The best way to protect your skin from the sun is by using these tips for skin cancer prevention.

Indoor tanning is not a safe way to get vitamin D.

Although it is important to get enough [vitamin D](#), the safest way to do so is through what you eat. Tanning harms your skin, and the amount of UV exposure you need to get enough vitamin D is hard to measure because it is different for every person and also varies with the weather, latitude, altitude, and more.

Statistics

Studies have shown consistently that indoor tanning increases a person's risk of getting skin cancer, including melanoma.

- A [meta-analysis](#) (a research study that looks at data from other studies) by [Boniol and colleagues in 2012](#) combined findings

from studies conducted in Europe, Australia, and the United States. The meta-analysis shows a link between indoor tanning and melanoma.

- Another meta-analysis [published in 2014 by Colantonio and colleagues](#) reconfirmed the association between indoor tanning and melanoma, and also found that newer tanning beds were not safer than older models.
- A [2014 study by Wehner and colleagues](#) estimated that more than 400,000 cases of skin cancer may be related to indoor tanning in the United States each year—causing 245,000 basal cell carcinomas, 168,000 squamous cell carcinomas, and 6,000 melanomas.
- A [2010 study by Lazovich and colleagues](#) in the United States found that the risk of getting melanoma increased the more years, hours, or sessions spent indoor tanning.

According to the data from the 2013 [Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System](#), many teens are indoor tanning, including—

- 13% of all high school students.
- 20% of high school girls.
- 27% of girls in the 12th grade.
- 31% of white high school girls.

According to the 2010 [National Health Interview Survey](#), indoor tanners tended to be young, non-Hispanic white (NHW) women. A closer look at the data showed the following rates of indoor tanning among NHW women—

- 32% of those aged 18 to 21 years.

- 30% of those aged 22 to 25 years.
- 22% of those aged 26 to 29 years.
- 17% of those aged 30 to 34 years.

Healthy People 2020 Objectives for Indoor Tanning

[Healthy People](#) provides science-based, 10-year national objectives for improving the health of all Americans. Healthy People 2020 has 20 [cancer objectives](#), including—

- Reduce the proportion of adolescents in grades 9 through 12 who report indoor tanning to 14.0%.
- Reduce the proportion of adults aged 18 years and older who report indoor tanning to 3.6%.

Indoor Tanning Policies

Indoor tanning is restricted in some areas, especially for minors.

United States

California, Delaware, Hawaii, Illinois, Louisiana, Minnesota, Nevada, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Oregon,* Texas, Vermont, Washington,* and some cities and counties have banned indoor tanning by minors younger than 18 years. For the latest information, see the National Conference of State Legislatures' [Tanning Restrictions for Minors: A State-by-State Comparison](#) and AIM at Melanoma's [2014 Indoor Tanning Legislation](#).

*The state laws in Oregon and Washington contain an exemption which allows people younger than age 18 to tan with a doctor's prescription.

[CDC research](#) shows that states with indoor tanning laws that

include age restrictions had lower rates of indoor tanning among minors.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration [has proposed a rule](#) to protect youth from the risks of indoor tanning devices by restricting use by minors younger than 18 years. This proposed rule also would require indoor tanning facilities to inform adult users about the health risks of indoor tanning and to obtain a signed risk acknowledgement from these users. The agency also is proposing a second rule that would require manufacturers and indoor tanning facilities to take more actions to help improve the overall safety of indoor tanning devices to protect adult consumers.

International

- Brazil and Australia have banned indoor tanning.
- Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Italy, Norway, Portugal, Spain, and the United Kingdom have banned indoor tanning for people younger than age 18.