



Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

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Is Indoor Tanning Safe?



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, and cancers of the eye (ocular melanoma).

Dangers of Indoor Tanning

Indoor tanning exposes users to both UV-A and UV-B rays, which damage the skin and can lead to cancer. Using a tanning bed is particularly dangerous for younger users; people who begin tanning younger than age 35 have a 59% higher risk of melanoma. Using tanning beds also increases the risk of wrinkles and eye damage, and changes skin texture.

Myths About Indoor Tanning

"Tanning indoors is safer than tanning in the sun."

Indoor tanning and tanning outside are both dangerous. Although tanning beds operate on a timer, the exposure to ultraviolet (UV) rays can vary based on the age and type of light bulbs. You can still get a burn from tanning indoors, and even a tan indicates damage to your skin. Tanning beds cause about 1,800 injuries requiring visits to the emergency room every year.

"I can use a tanning bed to get a base tan, which will protect me from getting a sunburn."

A tan is a response to injury: skin cells respond to damage from UV rays by producing more pigment. The best way to protect your skin from the sun is by using [these tips for skin cancer prevention](#). ([prevention.htm](#))

"Indoor tanning is a safe way to get vitamin D, which prevents many health problems."

Vitamin D (<http://ods.od.nih.gov/factsheets/vitamind/>)  (<http://www.cdc.gov/Other/disclaimer.html>) 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. Tanning harms your skin, and the amount of time

spent tanning to get enough vitamin D varies from person to person.

Statistics

In the United States, indoor tanning is estimated to cause about 419,000 cases of skin cancer every year. For comparison, smoking is thought to cause about 226,000 cases of lung cancer every year.

According to the 2011 [Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System](http://www.cdc.gov/yrbss/), (<http://www.cdc.gov/yrbss/>) the following proportions of youth report indoor tanning—

- 13% of all high school students.
- 21% of high school girls.
- 32% of girls in the 12th grade.
- 29% of white high school girls.

According to the 2010 [National Health Interview Survey](http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nhis.htm), (<http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nhis.htm>) 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.

Healthy People 2020 Goals for Indoor Tanning

[Healthy People](http://healthypeople.gov/2020/default.aspx) (<http://healthypeople.gov/2020/default.aspx>) [_](http://www.cdc.gov/Other/disclaimer.html) (<http://www.cdc.gov/Other/disclaimer.html>) provides science-based, 10-year national objectives for improving the health of all Americans. Healthy People 2020 has 20 [cancer objectives](http://healthypeople.gov/2020/topicsobjectives2020/objectiveslist.aspx?topicId=5), (<http://healthypeople.gov/2020/topicsobjectives2020/objectiveslist.aspx?topicId=5>) [_](http://www.cdc.gov/Other/disclaimer.html) (<http://www.cdc.gov/Other/disclaimer.html>) including—

- Reduce the proportion of adolescents in grades 9 through 12 who report using artificial sources of ultraviolet light for tanning to 14.0%.
- Reduce the proportion of adults aged 18 years and older who report using artificial sources of ultraviolet light for tanning to 13.7%.

Indoor Tanning Policies

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

United States

- California, Illinois, Nevada, Oregon, Texas, and Vermont have banned the use of tanning beds by minors.
- Some local jurisdictions also have banned the use of tanning beds by minors.
- [Tanning Restrictions for Minors: A State-by-State Comparison](http://www.ncsl.org/IssuesResearch/Health/TanningRestrictionsforMinorsstatelawsummary/tabid/14394/default.aspx) (<http://www.ncsl.org/IssuesResearch/Health/TanningRestrictionsforMinorsstatelawsummary/tabid/14394/default.aspx>) [_](http://www.cdc.gov/Other/disclaimer.html) (<http://www.cdc.gov/Other/disclaimer.html>) (National Conference of State

Legislatures)

- [Enforcement of State Indoor Tanning Laws in the United States \(http://www.cdc.gov/pcd/issues/2008/oct/07_0194.htm\)](http://www.cdc.gov/pcd/issues/2008/oct/07_0194.htm)

International

- Brazil and one state in Australia (New South Wales) have banned the use of tanning beds.
- The United Kingdom, Germany, Scotland, France, several Australian states, and several Canadian provinces have banned indoor tanning for people younger than age 18.

Related Links

- [Indoor Tanning \(http://www.aad.org/media-resources/stats-and-facts/prevention-and-care/indoor-tanning\)](http://www.aad.org/media-resources/stats-and-facts/prevention-and-care/indoor-tanning) [Ⓔ \(http://www.cdc.gov/Other/disclaimer.html\)](http://www.cdc.gov/Other/disclaimer.html) (American Academy of Dermatology)
- [Know the Risks of Indoor Tanning \(http://www.fda.gov/ForConsumers/ConsumerUpdates/ucm350790.htm\)](http://www.fda.gov/ForConsumers/ConsumerUpdates/ucm350790.htm) [Ⓔ \(http://www.cdc.gov/Other/disclaimer.html\)](http://www.cdc.gov/Other/disclaimer.html) (U.S. Food and Drug Administration)
- [Consumer Information: Indoor Tanning \(http://www.consumer.ftc.gov/articles/0129-indoor-tanning\)](http://www.consumer.ftc.gov/articles/0129-indoor-tanning) [Ⓔ \(http://www.cdc.gov/Other/disclaimer.html\)](http://www.cdc.gov/Other/disclaimer.html) (Federal Trade Commission)
- [Artificial tanning sunbeds \(http://www.who.int/uv/intersunprogramme/activities/uvartsunbeds/en/\)](http://www.who.int/uv/intersunprogramme/activities/uvartsunbeds/en/) [Ⓔ \(http://www.cdc.gov/Other/disclaimer.html\)](http://www.cdc.gov/Other/disclaimer.html) (World Health Organization)

Podcasts

- [Indoor tanning teens \(http://www.hhs.gov/news/healthbeat/2014/04/indoor-tanning-teens.html\)](http://www.hhs.gov/news/healthbeat/2014/04/indoor-tanning-teens.html) [Ⓔ \(http://www.cdc.gov/Other/disclaimer.html\)](http://www.cdc.gov/Other/disclaimer.html)
- [International indoor tanning \(http://www.hhs.gov/news/healthbeat/2014/03/international-indoor-tanning.html\)](http://www.hhs.gov/news/healthbeat/2014/03/international-indoor-tanning.html) [Ⓔ \(http://www.cdc.gov/Other/disclaimer.html\)](http://www.cdc.gov/Other/disclaimer.html)
- [Rising melanoma \(http://www.hhs.gov/news/healthbeat/2014/02/rising-melanoma.html\)](http://www.hhs.gov/news/healthbeat/2014/02/rising-melanoma.html) [Ⓔ \(http://www.cdc.gov/Other/disclaimer.html\)](http://www.cdc.gov/Other/disclaimer.html)
- [Tans all over America \(http://www.hhs.gov/news/healthbeat/2013/09/tans_all_over_america.html\)](http://www.hhs.gov/news/healthbeat/2013/09/tans_all_over_america.html) [Ⓔ \(http://www.cdc.gov/Other/disclaimer.html\)](http://www.cdc.gov/Other/disclaimer.html)
- [More tanning bed cancers \(http://www.hhs.gov/news/healthbeat/2012/10/20121031b.html\)](http://www.hhs.gov/news/healthbeat/2012/10/20121031b.html) [Ⓔ \(http://www.cdc.gov/Other/disclaimer.html\)](http://www.cdc.gov/Other/disclaimer.html)

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