



Cancer Hazards of Tanning Beds May Lead to Federal Ban for Teenagers

Written On March 29, 2010 By [Bob Kraft](#)

The cancer hazard of tanning beds is a particular concern to me. I have had several employees over the years who visit tanning salons far too frequently, against my fatherly advice. I was just as bad when I was young, although since we didn't have tanning beds, I just played outdoors to get tan. But we didn't know as much about skin cancer back then. Now, there's no good excuse to subject your body to harmful sunlamps. Yes, a nice tan is attractive, but it doesn't add enough to your appeal to make it worth the risks of cancer mutilating your body when you're older.

Texas bans tanning salon use by kids under age 16.5, and requires parental permission for use by kids under age 18. Here are excerpts from a recent article by the Associated Press discussing the possibility of a federal ban on tanning bed use by teenagers:

Federal health experts say more restrictions are needed to protect teenagers from the cancer risks of tanning beds, including a potential ban for people under 18.

A panel of advisers to the Food and Drug Administration recommended Thursday that the agency put tighter controls on artificial tanning, ranging from requiring parental consent forms to banning the practice in younger teens.

The FDA has regulated sunlamps for more than 20 years, but a recent report by the World Health Organization tied the devices to skin cancer, prompting a call for tougher rules.

The WHO analysis showed that the deadliest form of skin cancer increases 75 percent in people who use tanning beds in their teens and 20s.

More than 30 states already have tanning salon regulations in place — including a handful that require parental consent — but new FDA requirements would apply nationally.

The panel also recommended the FDA add bolder warning labels to tanning beds and change how they are regulated.

Dr. William James, president of the American Academy of Dermatology Association, said his group has seen a startling increase in skin cancer among women in their teens and twenties.

“What was formerly considered a disease of older men is ballooning in young women, the very target audience and number one customer of the tanning industry,” James said.

Nearly 69,000 U.S. cases of melanoma, the most dangerous form of skin cancer, were diagnosed last year. Also linked to ultraviolet exposure are basal and squamous cell cancer carcinomas, which affect more than 1 million Americans a year. They’re usually easily removed but the American Cancer Society counts 2,000 annual deaths.

Fair-skinned people who don’t tan easily are at highest risk for skin cancer. Melanoma is particularly linked to sunburns at a young age, though it is usually diagnosed in the 40s and 50s.