



Indoor Tanning Beds: Addictive and Dangerous for Teens and Young Adults

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Having seen one client die a hideous death from skin cancer that spread to his brain, I'm not a fan of anything that increases the odds of people getting skin cancer. Now a report in the New England Journal of Medicine lays out the compelling case that using indoor tanning beds causes skin cancer and death, and most vulnerable are the teenagers and young adults who get addicted to regular use of tanning beds.

The key facts from this prestigious [medical journal's report](#):

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- * Tanning bed use nearly doubles the risk of deadly melanoma -- cancer of the pigment-producing cells in the skin -- in frequent users.
- * The risk of other types of skin cancer, like squamous cell, more than doubles with ANY history of tanning bed use. And although squamous skin cancer is more curable than melanoma, a small fraction of cases spread beyond the skin and cause death.
- * Tanning beds are very likely addictive. They make people feel good -- physically and mentally -- because they stimulate production of beta-endorphin, an opium-like substance in the brain.
- * The ultraviolet rays from tanning beds cause DNA damage in the skin cells, which triggers production of melanin, the pigment that turns the skin a nice toasty brown. The problem of course is that when those melanin-producing cells go haywire, you have melanoma, and that can easily become incurable before you notice it.

People use tanning beds an estimated one million times every day in the U.S; many of them start in their teens and continue into young adulthood.

The tanning bed industry says one in ten Americans use its products -- 30 million people. That means that many skin cancers every year can be laid at the feet of this industry, with just as strong a scientific case as the one against the tobacco industry.

The defenders of tanning beds say it's a good way to get your skin to make Vitamin D. But that depends on a lot of variables, and a better option, without the risk of cancer, might be to just swallow a Vitamin D supplement pill.

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