



TO TAN OR NOT TO TAN?

HERE ARE THE FACTS!

WHO GETS SKIN CANCER?

Skin cancer is the most common cancer in the United States. It affects men and women, young and old. Over 90 percent of skin cancers are caused by exposure to ultraviolet (UV) light, the same type of light that makes people tan. Skin cancer can be prevented by taking a few safety measures, such as wearing sunscreen, staying in the shade AND avoiding artificial sources of UV light, such as tanning beds.

WHAT IS SKIN CANCER?

Melanomas and nonmelanomas are the two categories of skin cancer.

Nonmelanomas (usually called basal cell and squamous cell cancers) are the most common cancers of the skin. They are also the easiest to treat if found early. These cancers are more common in older people.

Melanoma is the most common cancer in women ages 25 to 29. Melanomas can affect teens and young adults, especially those who do not protect their skin or have other risk factors.

WHAT ARE THE FACTS ABOUT TANNING AND TANNING BEDS?

- Persons who first use tanning beds before the age of 35 increase their risk of melanoma by 75 percent.
- Tanning beds are in the same cancer risk category as arsenic, tobacco smoke, the hepatitis B virus and radioactive plutonium.
- There is no such thing as a "safe tan." A base tan does not protect from sunburn. In fact, a tan is the body's natural response to UV rays and indicates that the skin has been damaged.
- Tanning beds use the same UV light as sunlight. Just 20 minutes in a tanning booth is the same as spending an entire day at the beach.
- UV rays break down the elasticity of the skin, causing premature aging, fine lines and wrinkles.
- Vitamin D is vital to bone health, but most people can get enough vitamin D through their diet or by using dietary supplements without participating in harmful tanning activities.
- Tanning will not clear acne. Although tan skin may temporarily cover up redness caused by acne, tanning will cause irritation and oil production that can worsen the condition. Also, if you are taking acne medication, exposure to UV rays can be extremely damaging and dangerous.

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Anne Arundel County Department of Health

www.LearnToLiveHealthy.org

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WHAT SHOULD I DO TO KEEP MY SKIN BEAUTIFUL, HEALTHY AND SAFE?

- **Avoid tanning.** Whether using indoor tanning devices or laying outside in the sun, tanning is largely for cosmetic purposes. Tanning unnecessarily increases the risk for developing skin cancer and causes premature skin aging.



- Always apply a broad-spectrum sunscreen with **SPF of 30 or higher** 30 minutes before going outside, even on cold and cloudy days. Remember to protect yourself year-round!
- Always **reapply sunscreen** every two hours and after swimming or sweating, even if using a waterproof or water-resistant sunscreen.

- Remember, the sun is at its strongest from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. For added protection, **cover up** by wearing sunglasses, a wide-brimmed hat, long-sleeved shirt and full-length pants. **Stay in the shade** whenever possible.



- If you want to look "tan," **consider using sunless tanners.** These products provide a tanned look without exposure to UV light. Most sunless tanning products do not contain sunscreen, so it is still important to use sunscreen with an SPF of 30 or higher.



- **Drink plenty of water,** and eat foods rich in antioxidants, vitamins and minerals, such as **fruits, vegetables** and **whole grains.** They have been proven to clear your complexion, as well as soften and brighten your skin.
- **Check your skin regularly** and consult your doctor if you have questions about your skin.

For more information on sun safety, visit the Anne Arundel County Department of Health's Learn To Live website at www.LearnToLiveHealthy.org. Call the Learn To Live Line at 410-222-7979 to order a Get Sun Smart information kit.

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WHAT DO YOUNG PEOPLE WITH SKIN CANCER HAVE TO SAY?

Here are some stories and comments from young women who were diagnosed with skin cancer:

"When I turned 17, I wanted to be tan. I started using tanning beds," says Brittany Lietz, a former Miss Maryland. At age 20 she was diagnosed with melanoma and had to have surgery that left a scar several inches long on her back.

"I was frightened and in a lot of pain, receiving treatment for something that I could have prevented," says Brittany.

Since then, she has had 20 suspicious lesions removed.

Katie Collier, a Florida resident and former tanning salon user, was diagnosed with skin cancer at age 15. As a result of her experience, she has been testifying to lawmakers to ban teens from tanning salons.

Kimberly Sanga started using tanning beds at age 14 and was diagnosed with her first skin cancer after four years of tanning. She had skin cancer removed from her breast at age 18. For teens who want to tan, she advises, "Before you slip into a tanning bed, think about your future and the damage you are doing."

Diana Shaffer, a Pennsylvania resident, started using tanning beds at age 14 and was diagnosed with melanoma at age 24.

"I think I became addicted to tanning," she recalls. **"In the beginning, I went two or three times a week. Before I knew it, I was going more often."**

After her experience, she wonders,

"Why do we let tanning beds kill people?"