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INFORMATION FROM YOUR PEDIATRICIAN

Ban the tan: Using tanning beds can harm your skin, eyes

Are you feeling a bit pale after a long winter? Thinking about using a tanning bed before going somewhere warm for spring break? You might want to think again. Indoor tanning beds can be dangerous — or even deadly.



People who use tanning beds before they are 35 years old are 75% more likely to get melanoma (skin cancer). Melanoma affects 68,000 people in the United States and kills one out of eight of those people every year. Those who start tanning when they are young also have a higher risk of other types of skin cancer. That's why the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and pediatricians tell anyone under age 18 that they should never use a tanning bed.

Tanning salons sometimes give out wrong information about safety. For example, tanning salon workers in Missouri allowed children as young as 10 years old to use tanning beds, according to a new study in the medical journal *Pediatrics*. Some customers were told that they should use a tanning bed before going on vacation somewhere warm to avoid sunburns (they shouldn't) or that doctors recommend

tanning beds (they don't). Actually, the "healthy" glow on your skin after tanning is not healthy at all. It is a sign of skin damage.

Tanning beds do more than just hurt skin and cause cancer. The bright light can cause eye problems, itchy skin and make you more likely to get sick. Even teenage boys are at risk. In one study, boys who use indoor tanning often said they feel bad about how they look. They also were more likely to do other unhealthy things, like try weight loss tricks, alcohol, drugs, cigarettes and steroids.

In many states, it is illegal for anyone younger than age 18 to use a tanning salon. Even if you are allowed to go with a note from your parents, think before you ask. It is healthier to be happy in your own skin.

— Trisha Koriath

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