

Personal Service Establishments

Tanning Under Lights: What you don't know would surprise you ...

There is no safe way to tan

Tanning beds and sun lamps release ultraviolet (UV) rays just like the sun. Exposure to the ultraviolet radiation (UV A and B rays) from tanning equipment can lead to a number of health problems. If you choose to get a tan then you should also know about the health risks to help you make an informed decision.

Specific health risks commonly associated with tanning include:

➤ **Sunburn (also known as "erythema")**

When the skin is not thick enough to protect itself from exposure to UV radiation then it can become inflamed (red, sore and/or blister). This can occur immediately or may take up to 24 hours.

➤ **Premature aging**

Too much exposure to UV radiation can cause the skin to:

- Be more prone to damage (i.e. a "leathery look").
- Lose its elasticity (i.e. sagging skin).

This means you may get wrinkles a lot earlier than expected!

➤ **Skin cancers**

Tanning bed use increases the risk of developing skin cancer. Skin cancer is one of the most common and most preventable types of cancer.

Studies have shown the risk of skin cancer increases by 75% when indoor tanning equipment use starts before the age of 35.

➤ **Infections**

Reusable eye goggles that are not properly disinfected between customers can cause infections such as "Pink Eye". Also, skin infections can occur from tanning bed surfaces that are not properly disinfected.



➤ **Allergic reactions**

People who are sensitive to UV radiation may develop symptoms such as an itchy red rash.

➤ **Eye damage and diseases**

Overexposure to UV radiation can cause temporary or permanent eye damage including:

- Painful injuries to different parts of the eye including the cornea, conjunctiva and retina. Some of the common injuries are known as "welder's flash" or "snow blindness".
- Browning of the lens and loss of elasticity that can cause aging of the eyes.
- Cataracts and eye cancer that can lead to blindness.

Where do the potential health risks come from?

Health risks can come from:

- Over exposure to UV radiation (too much time under the lights) and not enough time between tanning sessions.
- Contaminated eye goggles.
- Contaminated tanning bed surfaces.
- Incorrect eye protection.

Use the following checklist for questions to ask yourself when making a decision about indoor tanning.

- Is the tanning salon inspected by the local health department?

In Fraser Health, tanning salons are routinely inspected by Environmental Health Officers. Inspections are conducted to monitor and encourage operators to follow the standards outlined in the "Personal Service Establishments Regulation (BC reg 188/88)" and "Guidelines for Tanning Salon Operators".

To view the latest Fraser Health inspection reports, visit www.fraserhealth.ca/pse

- Does the operator seem to be knowledgeable and tell you about the health risks related to the use of tanning equipment? For example,
 - *Are you provided information about the health risks and injuries?*
 - *Are you advised that the use of certain drugs (i.e. antibiotics) and cosmetics may increase the effects of UV radiation?*
 - *Talk to your doctor if you have any concerns before you start indoor tanning.*
 - *Are you advised that some reactions such as sunburn or itchiness may be delayed?*
 - *Report any reactions from tanning to the salon operator and see you doctor for any health concerns.*
- Have you read and will you follow the warning labels provided on the tanning bed or sunlamp?
- Do you know the location of the "on-off" switch in the case of an emergency?
 - *Ask the operator to show you.*

Tanning salon staff should be willing to discuss any questions you have about tanning equipment, health concerns and the amount of time you should spend Under the Lights.

For any questions or concerns contact your local Environmental Health Services department.

Website: www.fraserhealth.ca/healthprotection

- Are you familiar with the exposure times in minutes for your skin type? The tanning salon operator can help you to decide the appropriate time.
 - *Remember you should wait at least 48 hours between each tanning session. This is the minimum time needed for your skin to repair damage from UV radiation.*
- Do you have safety eyewear to prevent eye damage? Safety eyewear can be single use or reusable but must be intended for use in indoor tanning booths (i.e. sunglasses can not be used as suitable eye protection).
 - *If reusable eyewear or goggles are provided - ask the operator about disinfection practices. Reusable goggles must be disinfected after each customer.*
 - *It is recommended that you purchase protective eyewear for personal use.*
- Are tanning bed surface areas disinfected after each customer?
 - *Disinfectant such as a bleach/water solution can help destroy harmful germs.*

Tanning Salon myths and surprising truths

- **Myth:** Using an indoor tanning salon to get a tan before you go on a hot weather vacation will protect you from getting a sunburn.

Truth: *Using a tanning bed to get a tan before exposing your skin to the sun will not protect your skin. Always use sunscreen to protect yourself from the sun's ultraviolet rays. This will help protect you from getting skin cancer later in life.*

- **Myth:** Indoor tanning is safer than outdoor tanning.

Truth: *There is no safe way to tan. Exposure to ultraviolet radiation from tanning beds/sunlamps or the sun is linked to many health problems including sunburn, infections, eye damage and skin cancer.*