

Tanning Bed Operators Often Don't Restrict Teen Access to Tanning Beds

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Sept. 21, 2009 -- A new study shows most tanning bed operators don't restrict [teens'](#) access to indoor tanning beds during the first week of use as recommended by the FDA.

The FDA recommends but does not require that indoor tanning bed operators limit teens to three or fewer tanning bed session in the first week. But researchers found only about 11% did so, and 71% of tanning bed operators said they would allow a teen to tan seven days a week.

"Exposure to UV radiation from indoor tanning lamps has been linked with both [melanoma](#) and squamous cell [cancer](#), and first exposure before age 35 years may increase melanoma risk by as much as 75 percent," write researcher Latrice C. Pichon, PhD, MPH, of San Diego State University and colleagues in the *Archives of Dermatology*.

Researchers say the popularity of indoor tanning with adolescent girls in recent years may also be behind a recent increase in melanoma rates among U.S. women aged 15-39.

Teen Tanning Bed Access

In the study, researchers surveyed 3,647 indoor tanning operators in the U.S. by phone. The caller posed as a prospective fair-skinned 15-year old customer who had never tanned before.

The results showed about 87% of the tanning bed operators required teens to get parental consent, 14% required a parent to accompany the tanner, and 5% would not allow a 15-year-old to tan at all.

Researchers found facilities in states with laws regulating indoor tanning or youth access to tanning beds were much more likely to require parental consent than those without such laws. As of 2005, 28 states had laws regulating indoor tanning and 21 had youth access restrictions.

The study also showed only about 11% of tanning bed operators limited teens to the FDA-recommended three or fewer sessions the first week. The average number of tanning bed sessions allowed per week was six and 71% said they would allow a teen to tan seven days a week.

Researchers say more states should consider laws restricting teen access to indoor tanning beds to more forcefully educate teens and parents about the real dangers of indoor tanning.