



AAP News Parent Plus

INFORMATION FROM YOUR PEDIATRICIAN

Tanning beds, sun exposure unhealthy for teens

Teens may think a tan improves their looks. However, using indoor tanning beds and slacking on sunscreen can cause a host of health problems from wrinkled skin to blemishes and skin cancer.

Tanning bed users

One of the most vulnerable populations for skin cancer also is the group least likely to follow warnings about tanning and sun-related damage. High school students who use tanning salons at least four times a year are 15% more likely to develop basal cell carcinoma by age 35, according to a recent study. Those who use tanning beds seven times a year starting in high school raise their risk of developing basal cell carcinoma by 73% by age 35.

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends that youths under age 18 not use indoor tanning beds or other tanning devices. State laws vary on whether minors are allowed to use indoor tanning beds. Only California bans their use by minors under age 18, but many states are considering similar laws.

Sunscreen avoiders

Adolescents also are declining to use sunscreen as a protective measure. A National Youth Risk Behavior Survey found that 69% of white high school students did not wear sunscreen, and 78% of Hispanics did not use sunscreen when outdoors for more than an hour. Females were more likely than males to go without sunscreen.



Parents should encourage adolescents to use sunscreen, the AAP urges. When selecting a sunscreen product, consider new sunscreen labeling rules set by the Food and Drug Administration. The rules take effect for most products in December.

- Use a broad-spectrum sunscreen labeled SPF 15 to SPF 50. There is no evidence to support using sunscreen with an SPF higher than 50.
- Look for sunscreen that is labeled as water resistant and includes the duration of water resistance. There is no evidence that sunscreen is waterproof.
- Proper clothing and limiting exposure to the sun provide the best protection.

— Trisha Koriath