

Support House Bill 188

House Bill 188 prohibits the use of indoor tanning beds by minors under the age of 18 years of age. Under current Illinois law, minors ages 14-17 are permitted to use a tanning facility with parental consent.

Skin cancer is the most common cancer in the United States with more than 2 million cases being diagnosed annually. In Illinois, there will be over 2,400 new melanoma cases in 2013 and an estimated 360 people in Illinois will die from the disease each year.¹ Exposure to ultraviolet (UV) radiation, either from sunlight or indoor tanning devices, is the most important, avoidable, known risk factor for skin cancer.²

The Facts About Indoor Tanning

- Exposure to UV radiation, from sunlight or tanning beds, is associated with the development of skin cancer.³
- Exposure to tanning beds before the age of 35 years is associated with a 75% increased risk of melanoma.⁴
- Using a tanning bed increases the risk for squamous cell carcinoma by 67% and basal cell carcinoma by 29%. The risk is higher when the tanning bed use begins before age 25.⁵
- Over the last 20 years, the number of teens and young adults reporting use of tanning beds increased from 1% to 27%.⁶

The Tanning Bed Industry

Despite the evidence, there is a general misconception among adults and adolescents about the potential harms of using indoor tanning devices.

- The indoor tanning industry promotes the notion that a “base tan” obtained by using indoor tanning devices will have a protective effect from excessive sun exposure. However, the presence of a tan, in any form, signifies DNA damage to the skin,⁷ which is linked to premature aging of the skin and skin cancer.
- Indoor tanning proponents cite the link between UV exposure and vitamin D synthesis to support the health benefits of indoor tanning. However, UVB rays are the primary source of vitamin D synthesis, while most tanning devices primarily emit UVA, which penetrates the skin more deeply than UVB⁸ and is relatively ineffective in stimulating vitamin D synthesis.⁹ In addition, vitamin D can be obtained through many different foods.
- The indoor tanning industry promotes tanning beds as a safer alternative to sunbathing outdoors because most tanning beds can be controlled and moderated by skin type and operate on a timer. However, tanning beds deliver UVA radiation 5-15 times higher than what is delivered by the summer midday sun. Furthermore, multiple studies demonstrate that indoor tanners receive sunburns or suffer other skin damage after indoor tanning sessions.¹⁰

In 2009, the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) increased the classification of UV-emitting indoor tanning devices to the highest level of cancer risk – Group 1 – “carcinogenic to humans.” This classification places tanning devices in the same category as other known carcinogens such as tobacco, benzene, asbestos, and many other substances.

In 2010, the Indoor Tanning Association settled out of court with the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) regarding false health and safety claims about indoor tanning, such as those listed above. “The messages promoted by the indoor tanning industry fly in the face of scientific evidence,” said David C. Vladeck, Director of the FTC’s Bureau of Consumer Protection. “The industry needs to do a better job of communicating the risks of tanning to consumers.”



- 1 American Cancer Society Cancer Facts and Figures 2013
- 2 Reed, K, et. al. “Increasing Incidence of Melanoma Among Young Adults: An Epidemiological Study in Olmsted County, Minnesota.”
- 3 National Toxicology Program. 2011. “12th Report on Carcinogens.” National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, part of the National Institutes of Health.
- 4 Dore, J-F and Chignol, M-C. “Tanning salons and skin cancer.” Photochemical and Photobiological Sciences 2012.
- 5 Wehner, et. al. “Indoor Tanning and Non-Melanoma Skin Cancer: Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis.” British Medical Journal October 2012.
- 6 Robinson, JK, et. al. “Indoor Tanning Knowledge, Attitudes, and Beliefs Among Young Adults From 1998-2007.” Archives of Dermatology, 2008.
- 7 Brady, et. al. “Public Health and the Tanning Bed Controversy.” Journal of Clinical Oncology; May 2012.
- 8 Skin Cancer Foundation. Understanding UVA and UVB. 2012.
- 9 Woo, DK and Eide, MJ. “Tanning beds, skin cancer, and vitamin D: An examination of the scientific evidence and public health implications.” Dermatological Theory 2010.
- 10 Cokkinides V, et. al. “Indoor tanning use among adolescents in the US, 1998-2004. Cancer 2009; Boldeman C, et al. “Sunbed use in relation to phenotype, erythema, sunscreen use and skin diseases. A questionnaire survey among Swedish adolescents.” Journal of Dermatology 1996; Boldeman C, et al. “Tanning habits and sunburn in a Swedish population age 13-50 years.” European Journal of Cancer 2001.