



Solaria and Tanning Beds

Solaria use increases your risk of skin cancer

Commercial solaria (also known as solariums) are commonplace worldwide and offer skin tanning services through the use of lamps that emit artificial ultraviolet radiation (UVR). From 1 January 2016, commercial solaria have been banned in all states and territories across Australia. However, because the ban applied only to commercial solaria, it is still possible for an individual to have a tanning bed for personal use. As a result, there have now been several documented cases of individuals conducting illegal tanning businesses for profit or offering the services from private property.



What is the hazard?

The sunbeds used in the Solarium industry emit both UVA and UVB radiation, both of which are listed as carcinogens by the World Health Organization (WHO). Exposure to both types of UVR in a tanning bed increases the risk of developing skin cancer. Before bans were in place an Australian study estimated that exposure to UVR from the use of tanning beds contributed to 43 melanoma-related deaths and 2572 new cases of squamous cell carcinoma per year in Australia (Gordon et al., 2008).

Before the bans on the industry in Australia, sunbed safety was managed by voluntary regulation. Most notably these regulations prohibited use by people less than 18 years of age and restricted their use by people with certain skin types. However, it was found that operators did not show a good level of compliance with this voluntary code.

Currently, tanning beds could be operated by people with very little to no training in how they function. Without operator training there is likely to be minimal understanding by the operator of what level of UVR they are exposing the user to. As a result, the risk to health of using tanning beds may be even greater.

What should you do?

- Commercial tanning services are prohibited by law in Australia. Charging a fee for tanning sessions is therefore an illegal activity and should be reported to the police and/or the relevant state or territory regulator (www.arpansa.gov.au/regulation/regulators).
- Be aware of the risks to your health from using a tanning bed. People offering the service may not have any training in the operation of the tanning bed. Exposure to UVR emitted by a tanning bed increases your risk of developing skin cancer.

References

Gordon, L. Hirst, N. Gies, P. Green, C. 2008. *What impact would effective solarium regulation have in Australia?* *Medicine and the Media*. MJA 2008; 189: 375–378.
< <https://www.mja.com.au/journal/2008/189/7/what-impact-would-effective-solarium-regulation-have-australia> >