

Sunbeds

Sunbeds or tanning booths are not a means of tanning safely. Research shows that they increase the risk of skin cancer and contribute to skin damage including premature ageing.

Sunbeds use concentrated doses of ultraviolet (UV) radiation. This type of radiation is produced by the sun and is responsible for skin cancer. The difference between sunbeds and the sun is in the quantity and type of UV radiation they produce.

UV radiation responsible for skin damage is of two types UVA and UVB. Until recently it was believed that only UVB radiation was responsible for skin cancer and the majority of sunbeds emit high doses of mostly UVA.. It is now known that both forms of UV radiation play a part. UVA radiation actually penetrates the top layer of the skin and causes damage to the lower layer. This causes skin to age prematurely. Other side effects of over exposure to UVA are blotchiness, wrinkling and general looseness. High doses of UVA can also cause sunburn and ultimately contribute to skin cancer.

The more exposure to UV radiation the greater the chance of developing skin cancer.

Can a sunbed tan protect against sunburn?

- If your skin does not tan in the sun it will not tan on a sunbed.
- A tan is skin protecting itself from UV radiation damage.
- A tan produced on a sunbed gives very limited sun protection to the skin. Skin tanned in the sun is thickened, eventually becoming leathery to give increased UV protection. Do not rely on a sunbed tan as sun protection.
- If you use a sunbed it is strongly discouraged that you expose your skin to another session or natural sunlight less than 48 hours later because of the danger of re-exposing skin which is already damaged.

Health Hazards

Eye protection must be worn all the time the sunbed is on. Eyes exposed to UV radiation can suffer brief inflammation of the cornea and conjunctiva and damage can sometimes be permanent. The risk of developing cataracts later in life is also increased where eye protection is incorrect.

Many people using sunbeds develop minor skin irritations such as redness, itching and skin dryness. Sunbed use can aggravate existing rashes. Excessive sunbed use can cause burning and blistering. With longer term use skin will age prematurely and skin cancer may develop.