

It's never OK to use a sunbed for cosmetic tanning, but if you're still determined, read on...

Check that your sunbed provider is following the Health and Safety Executive Guidelines.

Has the sunbed operator:

- advised you on the health risks of using a sunbed?
- assessed your general health to ensure that you have no condition that would be made worse by exposure to UV radiation?
- assessed your skin type to determine whether you are too fair to use a sunbed?
- provided protective goggles to be worn at all times while exposed to UV radiation?
- advised you on how to turn the equipment on and off and what to do in an emergency?
- displayed the Health and Safety Executive Guidelines?

Skin cancer is the most common cancer in Northern Ireland and accounts for 1 in 4 of all cancers.

ALWAYS go to your GP if you notice any mole changes, new moles or abnormal skin changes.

If you have concerns about the safety standards observed by sunbed providers contact the Environmental Health Department of your local council.

# Sunbeds

Look a little deeper

For further information:

visit [www.careinthesun.org](http://www.careinthesun.org)

Cancer helpline **Freefone 0800 783 33 39**



Copy provided by Ulster Cancer Foundation and leaflet published by the Public Health Agency.

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# Look deeper

## **“Being tanned makes me feel healthy and attractive”**

A tan is a sign that your skin is trying to protect itself from ultraviolet (UV) damage – not a sign of health. Sunbeds give out ultraviolet rays, which are a direct cause of skin cancer. The UV rays from the sun and sunbeds have the same effect on your skin. Often sunbeds use a higher strength of UV rays. UV rays also cause early ageing of skin, resulting in wrinkling, sagging and yellowish or brown discolouration. Many people who use sunbeds also get skin irritations such as redness, itchiness and dryness. Sunbeds can cause damage to your eyes such as irritation and conjunctivitis.

## **“I have a special event to go to and I want to look my best”**

If you prepare for a special occasion with visits to the sunbed you will expose your skin to high doses of UV rays and therefore speed up skin damage and skin ageing. Having several sunbed sessions within less than 48 hours is particularly dangerous. A fake tan is a safer option, but remember that fake tan does not offer you protection from the sun.

## **“I’m going on holiday and don’t want to get sunburn”**

A suntan offers very little protection against sunburn - it is about the same as applying sunscreen of SPF 4. A tan from a sunbed offers even less protection. People who burn and who don’t usually tan in the sun will not tan on a sunbed anyway.

## **“Sunbed tanning is a lot safer than sun tanning, isn’t it?”**

Sunbeds do not offer ‘safe tanning’. Some sunbeds can give out UV rays many times stronger than the midday summer sun. Fast tanning machines are particularly dangerous as they produce UV rays in higher doses. It is difficult for the customer to be aware of the strength and type of radiation, and the safety of sunbed equipment.

**The International Commission on Non-Ionising Radiation Protection say, “Any use of sunbeds can raise the risk of skin cancer”.**

## **“They would not have a sunbed at my local gym if it was not safe”**

The sunbed industry is regulated by the Health and Safety Executive Guidelines; however research shows that compliance to this standard is poor. The location of a sunbed in a gym or health club does not mean it is safe, or that the operators have received training. In order to protect people’s health, Councils in Northern Ireland do not provide sunbeds on their premises. This sends the strong message that sunbeds are not safe. Under Health and Safety Executive Guidelines operators should tell you of the risks of sunbed use.

**The British Medical Association say, “Do not use sunbeds”.**