

British Photodermatology Group Position Statement on Sunbeds

Introduction

The availability and use of commercial ultraviolet-A (UVA) sunbeds has increased greatly in recent years. At the same time the intensity of UV emitted by these sunbeds has also increased such that their skin cancer risks are often equivalent to Mediterranean summer sunlight¹.

There is strong evidence that use of sunbeds increases the risk of skin cancers, including malignant melanoma². For those who start using sunbeds before the age of 35 years the relative risk of malignant melanoma and squamous cell carcinoma³ almost doubles.

Now all countries of the United Kingdom (UK) have introduced legislation controlling the use of commercial sunbeds. All European, and most International bodies concerned with advice on cancer or radiation protection have issued position statements or other guidance discouraging use of UV devices for cosmetic tanning and recommending restrictions on their use by under 18 year olds. The World Health Organisation classifies sunbeds as a "Group 1 Carcinogen"^{2,4-9}.

Ireland has recently (2015) completed the enactment of all provisions of its Public Health (Sunbeds) legislation. These include prescribing the information given to sunbed customers, banning of advertising claims of health benefits of sunbeds, banning promotions such as 'happy hours' or 'unlimited use of sunbeds offer' and the requirement of notification of sunbed premises to the Health and Safety Executive. The governments of the individual countries within the UK should consider adopting these extra provisions in order to maximise the benefit to Public Health.

Recommendations:

The British Photodermatology Group supports the provisions of the UK Sunbed Acts as good first steps towards a policy to minimise the risks of sunbed use. The BPG still calls for regulation of sunbed operators and inspection of premises.

In view of the statements, reports and advice of many National and International agencies on the use of sunbeds, and in light of the strong evidence of harm from the use of sunbeds for cosmetic tanning, the British Photodermatology Group make the following recommendations:

- The use of UV equipment for cosmetic tanning should be strongly discouraged.
- In commercial premises sunbed use should be banned for under-18s, as already enacted in all the countries of the UK.
- Strong public information programmes should emphasise the risks of sunbeds, especially to children and young adults.
- Advertising by the sunbed industry should be carefully scrutinised.
- Any claims of health benefits from sunbed use should be banned.

Sunbeds should never be used by these groups::

Under 18 years of age

Those with fair/freckly skin that does not normally tan with sun exposure

Those with large number of moles
Those with a history of skin cancer;
Those with abnormal sensitivity to the sun either due to photosensitive skin diseases (sun allergies) or medication

- As part of the Registration of owners/operators of sunbed premises and sunbed manufacturers:
Claims of health benefits for sunbeds must not be made.
All sunbeds should be limited to types I, II or III as defined by the IEC Standard (BS EN 60335-2-27: 2003)¹⁰. Use of UV tubes that exceed these limits should be banned.
UV goggles must be provided to clients.
All premises should be staffed by trained personnel.
Clearly visible information on minimising the risks from sunbeds and appropriate health warnings should be provided to clients prior to tanning exposure.

References:

- 1 Oliver H, Ferguson J, Moseley H. Quantitative risk assessment of sunbeds: impact of new high power lamps. *British Journal of Dermatology August 2007*; **157**: 350-6.
- 2 IARC. International Agency for Research on Cancer Working Group on artificial ultraviolet (UV) light and skin cancer. The association of use of sunbeds with cutaneous malignant melanoma and other skin cancers: A systematic review. *Int J Cancer 2007*; **120**: 1116-22.
- 3 Tierney P, De Gruijl FR, Ibbotson S *et al.* Predicted increased risk of squamous cell carcinoma induction associated with sunbed exposure habits. *British Journal of Dermatology 2015*; **173**: 201-8.
- 4 WHO. Artificial Tanning Sunbeds Risks and Guidance. In. Geneva: World Health Organisation. 2003.
- 5 CR-UK. Cancer Research UK Policy Statement Sunbeds. In: Cancer Research UK. 2009.
- 6 ICNIRP. Health Issues of Ultraviolet Tanning Appliances Use for Cosmetic Purposes. International Commission on Non-Ionising Radiation Protection. *Health Physics 2003*; **84**: 119-27.
- 7 COMARE. Committee on Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment (COMARE) Report 13: The Health Effects and Risks Arising from Exposure to Ultraviolet Radiation from Artificial Tanning Devices. In: Health Protection Agency. 2009.
- 8 SCCP. EU Scientific Committee on Consumer Products (SCCP) Preliminary opinion on: Biological Effects of Ultraviolet Radiation Relevant to Health with Particular Reference to Sun Beds for Cosmetic Purposes. In: EU SCCP. 2005; SCCP/0949/05.
- 9 CIEH. Chartered Institute of Environmental Health Policy Briefing Note - Sunbeds. In: *Chartered Institute of Environmental Health*. 2010.
- 10 IEC. Safety of Household and Similar Appliances. In: *Part 2: Particular requirements for appliances for skin exposure to ultraviolet and infrared radiation.*, Vol. 335. Geneva: International Electrotechnical Commission. 1995; 2-27.