

# British Photobiology Group Position Statement

## 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 sunlight [1]. There is emerging evidence that some users can become addicted to sunbed use [2]. There is strong evidence that use of sunbeds increases the risk of skin cancers [3]. A more recent review of the literature provides overwhelming weight of evidence that supports the view that sunbed use is associated with an increased risk of the most serious form, melanoma skin cancer [4]. For those who start using sunbeds before the age of 35 years the relative risk of malignant melanoma and squamous cell carcinoma [5] almost doubles.

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" and have issued guidance for public health interventions to manage sunbed use [6]. Despite the fact that the UK has left the EU there is no reason for recinding or loosening any EU-initiated legislation or guidance regarding sunbed use.

Ireland has 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 [7-11], and in light of the continuing 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.
- The ban on sunbed use in commercial premises for under-18s should continue 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

- Owners/operators of sunbed premises and sunbed manufacturers should be regulated and:

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) [12] 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:

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