

[IMAGE]

## **For Your Own Sake, Don't Fake Bake!**

People are increasingly using artificial tanning devices, such as tanning beds and sunlamps, simply to look better. Many people may feel that a tan enhances one's attractiveness. But appearances can be deceptive: Tanning devices emit ultraviolet (UV) radiation, which browns the skin, but may also lead to skin cancer. Researchers recently sought information on the link between tanning devices and two forms of skin cancer - basal cell carcinoma and squamous cell carcinoma.

New Hampshire residents were interviewed about factors related to sun exposure, including sun sensitivity; sunbathing; tanning-device use; and time spent outdoors. Participants were divided into three groups based on presence of skin cancer. Roughly 600 basal cell carcinoma patients, 300 squamous cell carcinoma patients, and 550 healthy individuals were involved in the study, which appeared in the *Journal of the National Cancer Institute*.

Use of any tanning device was linked to an increased risk for squamous cell carcinoma of two-and-a-half times; tanning-device use was associated with an increased risk for basal cell carcinoma of one-and-a-half times. The odds for skin cancer increased steadily for each decade younger that a person first used a tanning device.

Some sunlight is beneficial for good health, as it increases vitamin D production in the body. Only 15 minutes of sunlight per day on the face and arms is usually enough. But tanning on a bed, in front of a lamp, or under the sun for extended periods just to enhance your appearance simply isn't worth the risks.

### *Reference:*

Karagas MR, Stannard VA, Mott LA, et al. Use of tanning devices and risk of basal cell and squamous cell skin cancers. *Journal of the National Cancer Institute* 2002;94(3), pp. 224-226.

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