Compelling Evidence of the Link between Tanning Beds and Skin Cancer

Summary: The Washington State Dermatology Association is committed to reducing the incidence of skin cancer in our state. Strong evidence exists that the use of UV tanning beds causes skin cancer, yet many adolescents continue to tan indoors. There is a compelling case to introduce legislation to protect young people from the dangers of these machines and to regulate the tanning industry in our state. Such action will reduce the incidence of skin cancer in Washington.

INDOOR TANNING NEARLY DOUBLES THE RISK OF DEVELOPING MELANOMA

- A recent study found that indoor tanning nearly doubled the risk of melanoma – the most serious form of skin cancer. This risk increased with more time spent in the tanning beds with a 2.5 fold increased risk in those who used tanning beds more than 100 times per year.

TANNING SALONS HAVE NO OVERSIGHT BY THE FDA

- Tanning beds are a Class I device in the same category as tongue depressors and band-aids. Class 1 devices “present minimal potential harm to the user” and are therefore subject to RECOMMENDATIONS but not enforcement from the FDA.
- A recent study of tanning salons in all 50 states showed that 95% of indoor tanners exceed the FDA guidelines of tanning bed use and that 71% of indoor tanning facility users exceed the FDA guidelines for the frequency of tanning bed use.

THE TANNING INDUSTRY IN WASHINGTON IS COMPLETELY UNREGULATED

- There is no required training for tanning salon employees, nor is there any state oversight of tanning salons or tanning beds. Currently, 32 other states and 7 jurisdictions have such regulations in place. This is despite the fact that In July 2009 The World Health Organization moved UV tanning beds to the highest cancer risk category labeling them as "carcinogenic to humans", placing them in the same category as cigarettes.

MISCONCEPTIONS EXIST THAT TANNING IS SAFE AND EVEN BENEFICIAL

- Patrons of tanning salons routinely receive 4.5 to 7 times the UVB radiation needed for vitamin D synthesis. Vitamin D can be more safely obtained through oral supplementation.

BASE TANS/PRE-VACATION TANNING IS NOT SAFE AND DOES NOT PREVENT SUN DAMAGE OR BURNING

- A tan from a sun bed provides virtually no sun protection. The false notion that a base tan offers protection leads to decreased sun precautions during vacations.

FALSE DATA HAS BEEN WIDELY SPREAD

- Earlier this year, the Federal Trade Commission charged the Indoor Tanning Association (ITA) with making false health and safety claims about indoor tanning. The ITA has agreed to a settlement that bars it from any further deception.

MANY YOUNG PEOPLE ARE ADDICTED TO TANNING

- A survey of college students found that 39% exhibited an addiction to tanning. This was found to correlate with higher rates of anxiety, depression, and substance abuse.

THE TANNING INDUSTRY MARKETS SPECIFICALLY TO TEENAGERS

- One study showed tanning ads in 48% of high school newspapers using marketing techniques borrowed from the tobacco industry.

THE COSTS OF TREATING MELANOMA ARE HUGE

- The lifetime cost of taking care of patients diagnosed with melanoma in Washington State in 2008 alone would be around $20 million if all were early, thin lesions. For those unfortunate enough to suffer through the devastation of metastatic melanoma, including chemotherapy, and sometimes palliative care, the cost for an individual climbs to over $150,000.

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References:


