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When you tan indoors, machines deliver high doses of ultraviolet (UV) radiation to your body. UV radiation damages your skin cells. The damage causes your body to produce melanin, a pigment that darkens skin color.

UV radiation also can cause cancer, burns and eye damage. Each time you tan, you increase your lifetime risk for these problems, but you can take action to lessen some of the risks.

## Cancer

Indoor tanning can cause cancer, including basal and squamous cell carcinomas and melanoma — the deadliest form of skin cancer. It also increases the risk of eye cancer. Cancer risk increases with lifetime exposure to UV, and the risk is greater for those who start tanning when they are young.

**Protect yourself:** Limit your exposure to UV radiation to reduce your lifetime risk of skin cancer.

## Burns

Indoor tanning can cause first- or second-degree skin burns. Tell the operator about any burn, rash or injury you believe resulted from using a tanning device.

**Protect yourself:**

- Learn your skin type to understand how easily you might burn. The operator is required to determine your type using a skin classification system.
- Ask the operator how long you can tan based on your skin type. Maximum tanning time differs for each person.
- Check the maximum time for using your tanning machine. This information must be displayed on a sign next to the machine. Your tanning session must never be longer than the maximum posted time.
- You must follow the manufacturer's recommendations including the exposure schedule.
- Avoid starting with long exposures (close to the maximum time for the specific sunlamp product), which can lead to burning.
- Some skin types should not tan with UV radiation at all, for example, those with skin that burns easily and doesn't readily tan.

## Eye Damage

Indoor tanning can cause severe burns to the cornea — the clear outer covering of the eye. Greater lifetime UV exposure also increases your risk of cataracts — clouding of the eye's lens.

**Protect yourself:**

- Use protective eyewear. It's the law.
- Ask the operator for protective eyewear. It **must** be provided to you at no extra cost.
- Closing your eyes does **not** protect you.

## Skin Reactions

Tanning while using certain medications or cosmetics can increase sensitivity to UV radiation and cause exaggerated skin burns, itching, scaling, rashes or swelling. These include, but are not limited to:

- Contraceptives
- Acne medications
- Antibiotics
- Antidepressants
- Antihistamines
- Diuretics
- Anticonvulsants and tranquilizers
- Anti-inflammatories
- Some perfumes, essential oils, deodorants and tattoo ink

**Protect yourself:** Check with your doctor before tanning.

## Other Health Problems

Tanning weakens your immune system and can worsen some existing medical conditions. For example, people treated for Herpes simplex may have recurring cold sores, and the effectiveness of vaccines may be weakened.

**Protect yourself:** Check with your doctor before tanning.

