

## Reducing health risks from the use of UV tanning equipment

### Introduction

The use of any ultraviolet (UV) tanning equipment (eg sunlamps, sunbeds, tanning booths) may expose staff and will expose customers to UV radiation. UV radiation can cause injuries and ill health either in the short term (eg sunburnt skin or conjunctivitis) or in the long term (eg premature skin ageing, skin cancer and cataracts). Exposure to UV tanning equipment before 35 years of age significantly increases the risk of several types of skin cancer. Younger people appear to be more vulnerable to the cancer causing effects of indoor tanning<sup>1</sup>.

HSE considers the advice in this leaflet to reflect good practice for employers operating UV tanning equipment. This leaflet gives advice on how to reduce the health risks.

The guidance is in two parts:

Part 1. General information for people who are responsible for operating UV tanning facilities.

Part 2. Specific advice for customers. The information for customers is based on current expert medical opinion.

The guidance deals solely with the health hazards of UV radiation as they are currently understood. It does not provide an exhaustive list of all the hazards associated with operating UV tanning equipment; for advice on other risks that could be encountered while operating UV tanning equipment, eg electrical safety, manual handling or general health and safety information, see the HSE website at <http://www.hse.gov.uk/> and references 2-4.

### Part 1 Information for UV tanning equipment operators

#### Legal responsibilities

Under the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 (HSWA)<sup>5</sup> and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 (MHSWR)<sup>6</sup>, you, the UV tanning equipment operator, must:

- assess the risks in your undertaking (ie, workplace), including those from exposure to UV radiation;
- take measures to control, as far as is reasonably practicable, the risks identified;
- tell your staff about the results of your risk assessment and make sure they are competent to put them into action; and
- if you have five or more employees you must also write down the significant findings of the assessment.
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Carrying out the risk assessment is your responsibility though you can seek help and advice, from within your organisation or outside sources (eg consultants).

The Approved Code of Practice (ACoP) *Management of health and safety at work: Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999*<sup>6</sup> contains further information about legal responsibilities under the HSWA and MHSWR.

## **Assessing the risk of using UV tanning equipment**

The purpose of your risk assessment is to help you make an appropriate decision about the measures required of you to prevent or control UV radiation exposure levels to the people working near or using your UV tanning equipment.

A risk assessment does not need to be long or complex, but you do need to work through the following 5 steps:

- Identify the hazards.
- Decide who may be harmed and how.
- Evaluate the risks and decide on actions.
- Record your findings (if you employ 5 or more people) and implement them.
- Review your assessment and update it if necessary.

HSE's leaflet *5 steps to risk assessment*<sup>8</sup> gives straight-forward advice. HSE also publishes example risk assessments to show what is expected. Both can be found at [www.hse.gov.uk/risk](http://www.hse.gov.uk/risk).

The identified hazards associated with running and/or using UV tanning equipment are:

- short term:
  - burns,
  - skin dryness and itching,
  - eye irritation or conjunctivitis (where suitable goggles are not worn),
  - customers becoming trapped if the equipment fails mechanically,
- long term:
  - skin cancer,
  - cataracts (where suitable goggles are not worn),
  - premature ageing of the skin, which will look coarse, leathery and wrinkled.

Who might be at risk? You will need to consider:

- employees assisting customers;
- maintenance staff carrying out repairs or servicing;
- the customers who are using the equipment; and
- other members of the public (adults and children) on the premises.

You must inform your employees of the risks associated with using UV tanning equipment and it is also suggested good practice to share this information with your customers. To control the risk of exposure to UV radiation to your customers we advise you to provide them with the information in Part 2.

## **Operating your UV tanning equipment safely**

Following the advice in this section will help you to address the risks associated with using UV tanning equipment. However, this is not an exhaustive list and as a result of your risk assessment, you may have identified other controls that need to be in place.

- You should have received information from the manufacturer or supplier on the correct operation of your UV tanning equipment and be following it. This information should include the correct lamps to use and maintenance regime.
- It is suggested good practice to have trained staff who will be present while customers are using your UV tanning equipment.

- You should provide ongoing health and safety training for your staff to ensure they can correctly run the equipment, provide customers with information about the risks and assist as required.
- It is suggested good practice that you have effective procedures in place to provide immediate assistance to customers using your UV tanning equipment.
- If you are operating more than one piece of equipment in the same room you are recommended to use screening between the units.
- It is suggested good practice that you ensure the equipment is cleaned and sanitised between customers.
- When you are replacing UV tubes ensure the right type are fitted and reassess the exposure requirements of your customers when using the equipment.
- Ensure your staff are aware of the risks to themselves from working with the UV tanning equipment and how to reduce or avoid these risks.
- It is suggested good practice to keep maintenance records for the equipment, to demonstrate due diligence.
- It is suggested good practice to keep training records for your staff.
- It is suggested good practice that you provide adequate eye protection (goggles) for customers, and for staff when maintaining equipment.
- When carrying out your risk assessment you are advised to have regard to the World Health Organization (WHO) and EU Scientific Committee on Consumer Products (SCCP) who have recommended that under-18s should never use UV tanning equipment.

## References

- 1 The association of use of sunbeds with cutaneous malignant melanoma and other skin cancers: A systematic review. The International Agency for Research on Cancer and Working Group on artificial ultraviolet (UV) light and skin cancer. *Int. J. Cancer*, 120, 1116-1122 (2006)
- 2 *Five steps to risk assessment* Leaflet INDG163(rev1) HSE Books 1998 (single copy free or priced packs of 10 ISBN 0 7176 1565 0)
- 3 *Maintaining portable electrical equipment in offices and other low-risk environments* Leaflet INDG236 HSE Books 1996 (single copy free or priced packs of 10 ISBN 0 7176 1272 4)
- 4 *Essentials of health and safety at work* (Third edition) Guidance HSE Books 1994 ISBN 0 7176 0716 X
- 5 *Health and safety at Work etc Act 1974* Ch37 The Stationery Office 1974 ISBN 0 10 543774 3
- 6 *Management of Health and Safety at work. Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999*. Approved Code of Practice and guidance L21 (Second edition) HSE Books 2000 ISBN 0 7176 2488 9
- 7 Elwood J, Jopson J. Melanoma and sun exposure: an overview of published studies. *Int. J. Cancer*. 73 198-203 (1997)
- 8 Gandini S, Sera F, Cattaruzza, *et al*. Meta-analysis of risk factors for cutaneous melanoma. II. Sun exposure. *Eur. J. Cancer*. 41(1). 45-60 (2005)

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**This document contains notes on good practice which are not compulsory but which you may find helpful in considering what you need to do.**

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## Part 2 Customer advice

**Important warning: There are health risks associated with using UV tanning equipment – skin cancer, cataracts, premature ageing of the skin, sunburnt skin, dryness and itching, bumpy itchy rashes, and eye irritation/conjunctivitis.**

Any exposure to UV radiation from tanning equipment is potentially harmful. Please consider the following information when deciding whether to use this equipment or not.

**Don't use UV tanning equipment if your skin is particularly sensitive to sunlight.**

Based on World Health Organization (WHO) and Department of Health advice, you should not use cosmetic UV tanning equipment if,

- You are under 18.
- You have fair, sensitive skin that burns easily or tans slowly or poorly.
- You have a history of sunburn, particularly in childhood.
- You have a large number of freckles and/or red hair.
- You have a large number of moles.
- You are taking medicines or using creams that sensitise the skin to sunlight.
- You have a medical condition that is worsened by sunlight.
- You are pregnant.
- You or anyone in your family has had skin cancer in the past.
- You already have extensive skin damage due to sunlight.

### **Know your skin**

Skin is broadly classed as being one of six types:

- Type I – Often burns, rarely tans. Tends to have freckles, red or fair hair, blue or green eyes.
- Type II – Usually burns, sometimes tans. Tends to have light hair, blue or brown eyes.
- Type III – Sometimes burns, usually tans. Tends to have brown hair and eyes.
- Type IV – Rarely burns, often tans. Tends to have dark brown eyes and hair.
- Type V – Naturally brown skin. Often has brown eyes and hair.
- Type VI – Naturally brown/black skin. Usually black/brown eyes.

Your UV tanning equipment operator should advise you on your skin type and guide you on how many minutes you should limit your session to. The EU Scientific Committee on Consumer Products states that people with skin types I and II should not be advised to use UV tanning equipment. If you have skin types III, IV, V or VI your operator should guide you on how many minutes to limit your session to.

### **Important points for you, the customer, to consider before you decide to use UV tanning equipment**

1. **Skin cancer.** In the UK, the incidence of malignant melanoma is increasing at a faster rate than any other cancer except prostate. Using UV tanning equipment when young increases the risk of suffering from skin cancer in the future.
2. **Premature ageing of the skin.** In the longer term, too much use of UV tanning equipment will make your skin look coarse, leathery and wrinkled.
3. **Sunburnt skin.** Spending too long on UV tanning equipment can cause your skin to become painful and red, and it may blister and peel. Burning the skin from UV exposure can double your risk of skin cancer in the future<sup>7,8</sup>.

4. **Protect your eyes.** Never use UV tanning equipment without eye protection. If suitable goggles are not worn you may suffer eye irritation or conjunctivitis in the short term, and cataracts (clouding of the lens of the eye) in the long term. Do not rely on closing your eyes or using cotton wool.
5. **Don't use cosmetics, deodorants or accelerants while tanning.** Wash off any such products on your skin before using the equipment and make sure the equipment is clean before using it.
6. **Ensure you are medically fit** to use the UV tanning equipment, and that you are not taking any medication that could increase the sensitivity of your skin. Some conditions, as well as pregnancy, can make you more vulnerable to sunburn.
7. **Know your skin.** Tell staff about your normal reaction to sunlight so they can advise you whether to use the equipment and if so, for how long you can do so without burning (remember, using UV tanning equipment carries health risks even if you do not burn). (See **Know your skin** for further information.)
8. **Check your skin.** If you notice any abnormal skin reactions during the tanning session stop exposure at once and do not use UV tanning equipment again before seeing a doctor. If you notice any abnormal skin reactions after the tanning session do not use again before seeing a doctor. Seek medical advice promptly if you notice an unusual skin growth or a change in the size, shape or colour of a mole that occurs over weeks or months.
9. **Stay safe.** Ensure you understand how to use the equipment, how to turn it off and to locate the emergency button (or call for help if there is no button).
10. **Protect your skin in the sun.** A tan obtained from UV tanning equipment provides very little protection against sunlight. Always protect your skin from excessive exposure to the sun.

#### **Useful information**

SunSmart, the UK's national skin cancer prevention campaign at

[www.sunsmart.org.uk](http://www.sunsmart.org.uk)

The Sunbed Association (TSA) at <http://www.sunbedassociation.org.uk/>

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