

## Facts about solariums

### Key points

- Ultraviolet (UV) radiation, whether from the sun or a solarium, damages the skin and increases the risk of skin cancer.
- Solariums are not a 'safe' or 'controlled' way to tan.
- Solariums can emit UV radiation that is much stronger than the midday summer sun.

Many Australians still mistakenly believe that a tan is a sign of good health and that solariums provide a safer way to tan than the sun. Whether you're lying on the beach or in a solarium, there is no such thing as a safe way to tan. If you're considering visiting a solarium, it's important to know the risks.

### What are solariums?

Solariums (also called solaria, sunbeds or tanning booths) are fitted with light tubes that release concentrated artificial ultraviolet (UV) radiation. UV radiation is a type of energy produced naturally by the sun, or artificially in solariums.

Whether UV radiation comes from the sun or a solarium, it can cause skin damage, ageing and wrinkling of the skin, eye damage and skin cancer. Skin cells in the epidermis (the top or outer layer of the skin) produce a pigment called melanin, which gives skin its colour. When skin is exposed to UV radiation, melanin is produced and the skin darkens or 'tans'.

However, a tan is much more than skin turning brown. Even a light tan is a sign that your skin has been exposed to too much UV radiation and that damage has occurred to the cells below.

### Are solariums safe?

Solariums do not provide a safe way to tan. Just like the sun, solariums release UV radiation, which can seriously damage skin, harm your eyes and cause skin cancer.

Tanning in solariums can be especially dangerous, as the UV radiation from solariums can be much stronger than the midday summer sun.

Research shows that people who use solariums before the age of 35 increase their risk of developing melanoma by 75%, and the risk of squamous cell carcinoma is more than twice that of non-users, regardless of age. Each year in Australia, as many as 280 new melanomas, over 40 melanoma-related deaths and some 2,500 new squamous cell carcinomas are caused by solarium use.

Furthermore, solariums can cause:

- Burning, skin irritation, swelling, blistering and pain
- Premature ageing of the skin (wrinkles, blotches, skin thickening)
- Eye damage.

### Legislation in NSW

#### Solaria ban

In February 2012 the NSW Government announced that commercial solariums will be banned in NSW from 31st December 2014.

Until the ban comes into effect government regulation of solaria (see below) will continue to apply all commercial solaria businesses.

#### Current regulation

In May 2009, the NSW Government implemented the Radiation Control Amendment (Tanning Units) Regulation Act. Operators of solariums in NSW are required to:

- Ban clients under 18 years from using the solarium
- Assess the skin type of potential clients and ban people with very fair skin (Skin Type 1) from using the solarium

- Be appropriately trained to operate the solarium
- Ensure clients complete a consent form before using the solarium
- Restrict frequency of exposure, with successive tanning sessions being at least 48 hours apart
- Ensure clients wear protective eyewear
- Display warning notices.

Furthermore, no claims or representations may be made:

- About non-cosmetic health benefits
- That tanning units are risk-free
- That tanning sessions can be provided more frequently or at a higher UV exposure than allowed under the Regulation.

Further information is available on:

<http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/radiation/solaria.htm>.

For more information on skin cancer prevention and sun protection visit our website:

[www.cancercouncil.org.au/sunsmart](http://www.cancercouncil.org.au/sunsmart).

Cancer Council NSW recommends that when the **UV Index** is 3 or above, you should protect your skin in five ways:

- Slip on clothing that covers your arms and legs
- Slop on 30+, broad-spectrum sunscreen
- Slap on a broad-brimmed, bucket or legionnaire hat
- Seek shade
- Slide on wrap-around sunglasses.

For more information on skin cancer prevention and sun protection, visit our website [www.cancercouncil.com.au/sunsmart](http://www.cancercouncil.com.au/sunsmart).