

# Those under 18 may see paler days ahead

By ACSH Staff — March 1, 2011

If the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the American Academy of Dermatology have their way, minors under the age of 18 will be [banned](#) <sup>[1]</sup> from indoor tanning. Such a ban would apply even if their parents sign a permission slip.

Published in the journal *Pediatrics*, the AAP's policy statement warns against frequenting tanning salons and against sunbathing as well, reminding readers that even sitting in the shade doesn't fully protect beach bums from harmful, penetrating UV (ultraviolet) rays.

Almost one-quarter of white U.S. teenagers have tried indoor tanning at least once, surveys indicate, and many consider it an activity for mothers and daughters to do together, akin to going to a beauty salon. While some data suggest that tanning salon patrons who start going before the age of 35 have a 75 percent increased risk of developing melanoma — the deadliest type of skin cancer — another Scandinavian study finds instead that while 17 out of every 10,000 young women who have never or only rarely used a tanning bed will go on to develop melanoma, 24 out of every 10,000 young women who tan regularly will. More than one million skin cancers are diagnosed each year in the U.S., according to the CDC, only a small fraction of which are the potentially deadly melanoma. Approximately 68,000 Americans will be diagnosed with melanoma this year, and about 8,700 will die from it.

While he's hardly inclined to promote indoor tanning as an activity beneficial to one's health, ACSH's Dr. Gilbert Ross still believes that barring minors from the practice, even with parental consent, transforms the issue to one lying along a slippery slope of government interference. "Is the increased risk substantial enough to intrude into a personal or family decision, coming between parents and children? We in public health may decry the desire for a glamorous, bronze sheen, but where do we allow government to draw the line? Still, over the past 20 years or more, dermatologists have been emphasizing the need to use protective lotions and sunscreens. I would encourage younger people not to overexpose themselves to the sun and hope they are wise enough to learn something important about the risks involved with UV rays, even in the absence of government intervention."

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[1] <http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/02/28/us-health-tanning-idUSTRE71R1Y320110228>