

Dear Principal / Parent / Guardian,

Sunbeds and tanning are popular, especially with many young people, but scientific evidence reviewed by expert bodies, such as the World Health Organisation, highlights the associated health risks.

In order to protect young peoples' wellbeing, it is against the law for under 18s to be permitted access to a sunbed on sunbed premises in Northern Ireland.

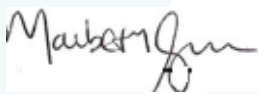
We are asking for your help to encourage and support young people in your school/family to make healthy choices by ensuring they are aware that sunbed use can lead to a number of health problems including:

- increasing your risk of skin cancer, especially if you first use a sunbed before the age of 35
- speeding up skin ageing which is characterised by a leathery, wrinkled appearance and loss of elasticity.

You may find it useful to read and share the information on facts and myths associated with sunbed use in the attached leaflet.

I would be grateful if school representatives could share this information with the parents/guardians of young people who attend your school.

Yours sincerely



Marbeth Ferguson

Skin cancer prevention co-ordinator  
Cancer Focus Northern Ireland  
On behalf of the Skin Cancer Prevention Strategy Implementation Group

# SHOULD I USE A SUNBED?

All sunbed users risk damaging their health but some people are at greater risk.

## This includes people who:

- have naturally fair skin (many NI people have skin that freckles and burns easily when exposed to the sun)
- are under 35 years of age
- have a large number of moles
- have ever had an abnormal reaction or allergy to light
- are taking certain medications eg some anti-depressants
- have had sun or sunbed exposure within the past 48 hours
- have a history of frequent childhood sunburn
- have been treated for skin cancer or pre-malignant skin lesions
- have sun damaged skin
- are pregnant
- are wearing cosmetics



For further information visit:  
[www.careinthesun.org](http://www.careinthesun.org)

If you have any concerns about cancer call Cancer Focus Northern Ireland's Freephone Nurseline

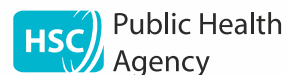
**0800 783 3339**

Monday to Friday 9am - 1pm  
Calls are free from a landline  
[nurseline@cancerfocusni.org](mailto:nurseline@cancerfocusni.org)

**Cancer Focus Northern Ireland**  
40-44 Eglantine Avenue  
Belfast BT9 6DX

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[www.cancerfocusni.org](http://www.cancerfocusni.org)

Charity No: NIC 101307



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**LOOK  
DEEPER  
INTO  
SUNBEDS**



Seek the advice of your GP if you notice any mole changes, new moles or abnormal skin changes.

## THE FACTS

It's against the law for under 18s to use a sunbed on sunbed premises

Sunbed use increases your risk of skin cancer, especially if you first use a sunbed before the age of 35

Using a sunbed is not an effective way to top up Vitamin D levels

## THE MYTHS

### 'A tan is healthy and attractive'

A tan is a sign that your skin is damaged by ultraviolet (UV) radiation from the sun or sunbeds – it is not healthy. UV rays cause skin cancer and early skin ageing with wrinkling, sagging and yellowish or brown discolouring.

### 'Using a sunbed will make me look my best for a special event'

Short periods of intense UV exposure on sunbeds can speed up skin damage and skin ageing. Sunbeds can also irritate your skin causing redness, itchiness and dryness and can damage your eyes. Fake tan is an alternative or go with your natural glow.

### 'I don't want to get sunburned on holiday'

Sunbeds offer very little protection against further skin damage when in the sun. People who burn and don't usually tan in the sun will also burn on a sunbed.

### 'Sunbed tanning is safer than sun tanning'

Sunbeds do not offer 'safe tanning'. Some sunbeds can give out UV rays many times stronger than the midday summer sun.

### 'My gym wouldn't have a sunbed if it wasn't safe'

Because your gym or health club has a sunbed doesn't mean it is safe.

## EXPERT VIEWS

The European Commission and its Scientific Committee on Health, Environmental and Energy Risks says:

*"There is no safe limit for exposure to UV radiation from sunbeds."*

*"Scientific evidence does not support the idea that it is safe to 'build up' a tan."*

The International Commission on Non-Ionising Radiation Protection says:

*'Any use of sunbeds can raise the risk of skin cancer.'*

The World Health Organisation: *"does not recommend the use of UV tanning devices for cosmetic purposes."*

### It's never okay to use a sunbed for tanning but if you're determined, read on ...

#### By law sunbed operators must:

- Display a Department of Health warning notice on the risks of using a sunbed
- Advise you about the health risks and provide an information sheet
- Always supervise sunbeds
- Provide protective goggles to be worn at all times while using sunbeds

#### Sunbed operators should also:

- Assess your general health in case you have a condition that would be made worse by sunbeds
- Assess if your skin is too fair for sunbed use
- Advise you how to use the equipment and what to do in an emergency

**IF YOU HAVE ANY CONCERNS ABOUT THE SAFETY STANDARDS AT A BUSINESS WITH SUNBEDS CONTACT THE ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH DEPARTMENT OF YOUR LOCAL COUNCIL.**