

Hurts So Good: Why You Don't Care If Tanning Is Bad For You

BY LISA JAFFE HUBBELL • POSTED JULY 26 2010 AT 7:49 PM

I grew up in Santa Cruz, CA, minutes from the beach. Nice afternoons and weekends were spent in the sun working on a tan. It was the 1980s and there was little public talk about the relationship between tanning and skin cancer. If there was, it's not likely we would have cared.



It turns out there might have been something other than teenage vanity at play: emerging research increasingly points to the potential addictive properties of ultraviolet rays. A [study](#) of indoor tanners in the June issue of *Clinical Experimental Dermatology* found that, using a modified version of the CAGE [addiction questionnaire](#), 41 percent could be considered addicted, and another 33 percent had problematic behavior. Similar results were reported in a [study](#) in the *Archives of Dermatology* in April.

Current research, although preliminary, seems to indicate a relationship between melatonin stimulating hormone (MSH) that helps you turn a golden brown and

endorphin production, says James Spencer, MD, a dermatologist in Tampa, FL, and spokesperson on the dangers of indoor tanning for the [American Academy of Dermatology](#). Essentially, UV rays increase brain chemicals that make you feel good.

The more rays, the greater the risk. That could make indoor tanning of particular concern, says Robin Hornung, MD, MPH, of the Everett (WA) Clinic. A study she did found tanning beds routinely gave off four times the UVA rays and twice the UVB rays as the noonday sun in the Washington, DC area.

If people tan in part because of addiction, it will be even harder to get an anti-tanning message across to patients, Spencer says. "We're going to have to reach out to our mental health colleagues for guidance on how to approach patients." Like smoking cessation, any reduction in the unhealthy behavior is a step in the right direction, he adds. Parents, teachers, and doctors can make a start by using some of the same tools used by those who successfully counsel smokers to quit: encourage tanners to think about making a change, to set a date certain for doing so, and then use whatever support they need to ensure they keep to their goals.

CONNECT THE DOTS

The American Academy of Dermatology has a lot of information on the [dangers of sun exposure](#), as well as [data](#) on the increase in the numbers of melanomas among younger people that they believe is a result of [too much indoor tanning](#) and other sun worship without sun protection. You can also find a [dermatologist](#) on the website. For information on sun protection, including facts about sunscreen, check out [this](#) EPA document.

[LINK](#) | [SHARE THIS POST](#) | [3 COMMENTS](#)

[Everyday Health](#) [Healthy Behaviors](#) [Lifestyle](#) [Research](#) [Wellness](#) [Women's Health](#)

3 COMMENTS



Sharon London

I am a 70 year old woman now paying the price for too much time in the sun working on a tan while I was young. After reading this, I suspect that I was absolutely addicted but I am not certain I would have accepted that message or the fact that I could be leaving myself open to skin cancer. Such is youth. Fortunately, I don't have skin cancer, but friends today who are around my age have much better looking skin than I do now and so I urge you to foster a love of tan-free skin. You won't regret it.

Posted July 28 2010 AT 12:42 pm

ABOUT OUR BLOG

Our blog is a collection of thoughts and stories that serve as inspiration for what healthymagination is—a shared commitment to creating better health for more people. It's written by the people behind healthymagination, as well as members of our advisory board and guest contributors from around the web.








POPULAR TOPICS

[Children](#) [Fitness](#) [health](#) [Healthcare](#)
[Health Tips](#) [Healthymagination](#) [Lifestyle](#)
[Nutrition](#) [Research](#) [Technology](#)

MOST POPULAR POSTS

- [3 Healthy Family Habits To Prevent Childhood Obesity](#)
- [Mental Fitness 101](#)
- [High Tech Helmets Protect Young Athletes From Concussions](#)
- [Is Lindsay Lohan Addicted to Adderall?](#)
- [World Suicide Prevention Day](#)

OUR AUTHORS

-  [Lisa Collier Cool](#)
-  [Britta Barrett](#)
-  [Conor McKechnie](#)
-  [Melba Newsome](#)
-  [Lisa Jaffe Hubbell](#)
-  [Paula Dranov](#)
-  [Randy Hecht](#)
-  [Karen Berger](#)

BLOGROLL

- [New York Times Well](#)



D3forU

Amazing how many 'give up' the indoor 'addiction' as soon as the weather turns nice outside, and they completely forget about it as soon as the cool autumn 'leather weather' hits above 40°N LAT.

Estimates are that 10% of the population uses indoor tanning services, while a majority just continually burn and overexpose themselves at the beach, park, pool, or in the privacy of their own back yard.

Posted July 29 2010 AT 5:54 pm



Lisa Jaffe Hubbell

Wow! I wrote this post and I didn't know that the number was so high of people who use them. I've told all my friends with teenage girls: read this. I had no idea that the UV output of tanning beds can be worse than being outside until I did my interviews. It's really eye opening!

Posted August 2 2010 AT 8:19 pm

- [John Barban](#)
- [The Healthcare IT Guy](#)
- [The Health Care Blog](#)
- [KevinMD](#)
- [Cooking Light Eating Smart](#)
- [Think Simple Now](#)
- [Good Magazine](#)
- [Diets In Review](#)
- [The Next Level](#)

CONTACT US

Share your ideas at:
contact.healthymagination@ge.com.

ADD YOUR COMMENT

NAME (required)

EMAIL (required)

Your comment needs to be approved by the site owner before it will appear. Thanks for your patience. If you have any questions, please read GE's [Blogging Policy](#).

I accept

[→ SUBMIT COMMENT](#)

[← PREVIOUS POST](#)

[NEXT POST →](#)

PROJECTS

- [Annual Report](#)
- [Better Health Conversation](#)
- [Morsel](#)
- [Health of Nations](#)
- [Healthy How-To's](#)
- [Visualizing Data](#)
- [Healthy Innovation](#)
- [Better Health Study](#)
- [Sharing Healthy Ideas](#)

ABOUT HEALTHYMAGINATION

- [What is Healthymagination?](#)
- [Leadership](#)
- [Advisory Board](#)
- [Press](#)
- [GE Healthcare](#)
- [GE Reports](#)

CONNECT WITH US

- [Blog](#)
- [Facebook](#)
- [Twitter](#)
- [YouTube](#)



[imagination at work](#) | [Contact Information](#) | [Privacy](#) | [Terms](#) | © 2010 General Electric Company