

UV TANNING EQUIPMENT

INTRODUCTION

The use of any ultraviolet (UV) tanning equipment (eg sunlamps, sunbeds, tanning booths) may expose staff and customers to UV radiation at levels which 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). This leaflet gives advice on how to minimise the health risks.

The guidance is in two parts. The first contains general information for people who have responsibility for the day-to-day operations where UV tanning facilities are available and the second (see inside pages) contains specific advice for customers. The information for customers takes account of current expert medical opinion and has been endorsed by the Department of Health as part of the *Health of the Nation* initiative.¹

The guidance deals solely with the health hazards of UV and does not cover other matters such as electrical and mechanical safety. Information on these other associated health and safety issues can be found in the documents listed at the end of the leaflet.⁴⁻⁶

Nothing in this guidance applies to medically prescribed UV radiation treatments.



WHAT ACTION DO OPERATORS NEED TO TAKE?

Under the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974² and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999,³ you must:

- assess the health and safety risks caused by work activity; including
- risks to employees and customers from exposures to UV radiation; and
- take measures to control these risks as far as is reasonably practicable.

To satisfy yourself that you are meeting these requirements for the control of UV risks, you should be able to answer the following questions:

- What are the nature and extent of UV hazards?
- Do you know which health risks are associated with the use of UV tanning equipment?
- Do you know the extent to which exposure to UV can vary with the type of lamps fitted in your equipment?
- Has the equipment supplier given you information on the extent and magnitude of the hazard?
- From this information do you know how to decide what advice to give an individual customer on the:
 - duration of each tanning session;
 - periods between each session;
 - total number of sessions per year?
- Are two pieces of tanning equipment located next to each other without screening, so that the hazard might be increased?

Who might be at risk? You need to consider:

- employees assisting customers;
- maintenance staff undertaking repairs or servicing;
- the customers who are using the equipment;
- other members of the public on the premises.



UV TANNING EQUIPMENT

CUSTOMER INFORMATION

IMPORTANT WARNING: THERE ARE RISKS FROM USING UV TANNING EQUIPMENT

As with exposure to natural sunlight, too much exposure to ultraviolet (UV) radiation from tanning equipment can damage your skin and sometimes your general health.

Short-term damaging effects

The short-term damaging effects of excessive exposure to UV radiation include:

- sunburnt skin, which becomes painful, red and may blister and peel;
- skin dryness and itching;
- bumpy itchy rash;
- eye irritation or conjunctivitis, (if suitable goggles are not worn).

Long-term health risks

There may also be long-term health effects including:

- premature ageing of the skin which will then look coarse, leathery and wrinkled;
- skin cancer - the more exposures, the greater the risks;
- increased risk of cataracts (clouding of the lens of the eye) later in life, (if suitable goggles are not worn).

Precautions

Don't use cosmetic tanning equipment if your skin is particularly sensitive.

Some people are more prone to skin damage caused by UV radiation than others. You are advised **not** to use cosmetic tanning equipment if:

- you are under 16;
- you have fair sensitive skin that burns easily or tans slowly or poorly;
- you have a history of sunburn, especially 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 which may sensitise the skin to sunlight;
- you have a medical condition that is worsened by sunlight;
- you or anyone in your family have had a skin cancer in the past.

If you have any doubts, ask your doctor or pharmacist if it is safe for you to use tanning equipment.

Don't use cosmetics before tanning

Some cosmetics, deodorants and similar preparations for use on the skin can increase sensitivity to UV radiation. It is best not to use them immediately before a tanning session and to wash off any that are on the skin, before using the equipment.

Tan gently

As a general guide it is best not to exceed 20 sessions per year; make a note of your number of sessions so you will not forget.

Tell the staff about your normal skin reaction to sunlight, bearing in mind that you may be exposing parts of your body not normally exposed to the sun. The operator of the equipment should then advise you on how long to use it; don't exceed this time. Don't try to get a quick tan by:

- exceeding the recommended times;
- having too many tanning sessions;
- having more than one session a day;
- sunbathing on the same day.

Seek advice about any problems

If you notice any abnormal skin reactions developing during the tanning session, stop the exposure at once and do not use tanning equipment again before consulting a doctor.

If you develop any abnormal skin reaction after a tanning session, do not use such equipment again before consulting a doctor. Seek medical advice if you notice any change in the appearance of a mole.

Protect your eyes

Make sure you use the goggles or other eye protection provided, before using the equipment; these should be worn all the time the equipment is switched on; *if no eye protection is provided, do not use the equipment.*

Understand the equipment

Make sure you know how to:

- use the equipment properly;
- switch it off;
- call for help in an emergency.

If you have any doubts, ask the staff.

Don't rely on your tan for protection

The tan obtained from cosmetic tanning equipment can give some mild protection from burning when you go into the sun, but it never gives complete protection. Nor does it provide much protection against the long-term health risks mentioned earlier. You should still follow sensible advice on safety in the sun such as that published by cancer charities (eg Cancer Research UK).

Know your skin

No matter whether you get your tan from the sun or tanning equipment, you should learn to recognise the early warning signs of serious damage. Most skin cancers are completely curable if detected in the early stages. Look for progressively changing moles or other skin discolourations. If you have any doubts, consult your doctor. Don't delay.

Useful information

Other useful information can be obtained from:

- 1 Cancer Research UK, PO Box 123, Lincoln's Inn Fields, WC2A 3PX Tel: 020 7242 0200 Website: www.cancerresearchuk.org
- 2 National Radiological Protection Board, Chilton, Didcot, Oxon OX11 0RQ Tel: 01235 831600 Website: www.nrpb.org

This information for customers is issued jointly by the Health and Safety Executive and the Department of Health.



Is the risk adequately controlled?

- Have you done all you should to reduce the exposure to your employees?
- Do you ensure that your employees and any maintenance staff avoid all unnecessary exposure to UV?
- Do any day-to-day systems of work need to be reviewed to ensure this?
- When replacing UV tubes, do you ensure that the right type are fitted and check if any exposure re-assessments need to be made?
- Do you provide information to customers on the health risks of UV exposure (see inside pages, 'Customer Information')?

What, if any, further action is necessary to control the risk?

- Have your staff been trained to answer questions on the health risks associated with UV (see 'Customer Information')?
- Do you give different advice to customers with differing skin types, as they may be in a particularly sensitive group?
- You may wish to consider keeping a record of the date and length of session of each customer's exposure: this is good practice.

You should also ensure that your staff:

- know how to avoid all unnecessary exposure to UV radiation;
- understand the health risks of exposure to UV radiation;
- can give advice to customers on:
 - how the equipment works;
 - how they can call for help in an emergency;
 - how long they use the equipment during each visit; and
 - any other safety features.

And for customers wishing to have a tanning session:

- you should ensure that before each session they are made aware of the 'Customer Information' in this document, which you may freely reproduce or photocopy and make available to your customers.

REFERENCES

- 1 *The health of the nation. A strategy for health in England* CM 1986 The Stationery Office 1992 ISBN 0 1011 9862 0
- 2 *Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 Ch37* The Stationery Office 1974 ISBN 0 10 543774 3
- 3 *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
- 4 *Five steps to risk assessment* Leaflet INDG163(rev1) HSE Books 1998 (single copy free or priced packs of 10 ISBN 0 7176 1565 0)
- 5 *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)
- 6 *Essentials of health and safety at work (Third edition)* Guidance HSE Books 1994 ISBN 0 7176 0716 X

While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the references listed in this publication, their future availability cannot be guaranteed.

HSE priced and free publications are available by mail order from HSE Books, PO Box 1999, Sudbury, Suffolk CO10 2WA Tel: 01787 881165 Fax: 01787 313995 Website: www.hsebooks.co.uk (HSE priced publications are also available from bookshops and free leaflets can be downloaded from HSE's website: www.hse.gov.uk.)

The Stationery Office (formerly HMSO) publications are available from The Publications Centre, PO Box 276, London SW8 5DT Tel: 0870 600 5522 Fax: 0870 600 5533 Website: www.clicktso.com (They are also available from bookshops.)

For information about health and safety ring HSE's Infoline Tel: 08701 545500 Fax: 02920 859260 e-mail: hseinformationservices@natbrit.com or write to HSE Information Services, Caerphilly Business Park, Caerphilly CF83 3GG.

This leaflet is available in priced packs of 10 from HSE Books, ISBN 0 7176 0672 4. Single free copies are also available from HSE Books.

This guidance is issued by the Health and Safety Executive. Following the guidance is not compulsory and you are free to take other action. But if you do follow the guidance you will normally be doing enough to comply with the law. Health and Safety inspectors seek to secure compliance with the law and may refer to this guidance as illustrating good practice.

© Crown copyright This publication may be freely reproduced, except for advertising, endorsement or commercial purposes. First published 10/95. Please acknowledge the source as HSE.