

Classifying indoor tanning behaviors can help physicians tailor prevention messages

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Identifying indoor tanning behavior patterns can help physicians tailor prevention messages, according to a report in the December issue of *Archives of Dermatology*, one of the JAMA/Archives journals.

“Nearly 2 million Americans tan indoors each day, with the number of individual users in the United States having doubled to nearly 30 million in the past decade,” according to background information in the article. “Evidence that indoor tanning poses a serious public health risk is increasing.” Recent studies have shown that sunlamp and sun bed exposure increases the risk for melanoma and non-melanoma skin cancers.

Joel Hillhouse, Ph.D., at the East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, and colleagues studied the indoor tanning behaviors of 168 women (average age 20.2) at a southeastern university from January 2006 to April 2006. The women were asked to complete questionnaires on indoor tanning to determine behavioral patterns, intentions, attitudes and perceptions about indoor tanning, descriptive indoor tanning norms, perceived subjective norms, indoor tanning predictors and tanning dependence.

Four types of tanners were identified: special event (tan numerous times over a short period associated with a special event, followed by extended periods of no tanning); spontaneous or mood (non-regular tanners with spontaneous patterns strongly influenced by mood); regular year-round (tan weekly or biweekly) and mixed (have both regular tanning periods

and shorter periods associated with special events). Researchers compared demographic, behavioral and psychosocial information for each of these groups.

“Event tanners [53.6 percent] tanned the least, started tanning the latest and scored lowest on measures of attitudes, social norms and tanning dependence measures,” the authors write. “Regular year-round tanners [11.9 percent] started the earliest, tanned at the highest levels and scored the highest on the attitude, social norms and tanning dependence measures. Spontaneous or mood tanners [6 percent] were similar to event tanners but with a mood component to their tanning.” Mixed tanners (28.6 percent) displayed a mixture of behaviors of regular and event tanning types.

Source: JAMA and Archives Journals

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