

Many still tanning, despite dangers, survey finds

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Under-30s most likely to use tanning beds or sunbathe, online poll suggests.

(HealthDay) -- Despite public education efforts, many young adults still don't understand the dangers of sun exposure and tanning, a new U.S. survey finds.

The nationwide online survey conducted by the American Academy of Dermatology found that 58 percent of respondents aged 18 to 29 believe people look more attractive with a tan, and 71 percent agreed with the statement: "[Sun exposure](#) is good for your health."

In the past year, about 40 percent of respondents in that age group tried to get a tan by using a tanning bed, spending time in the sun, using a self-tanner, or getting a spray tan. The survey also found that one-quarter of respondents aged 18 to 29 were unsure if sun exposure can cause

wrinkles.

"Our survey showed that age was highly associated with tanning, as the respondents under age 30 were more likely to use tanning beds and spend time in the sun," dermatologist Dr. Zoe Draelos said in an academy news release. "Ultimately, seeking to change the color of your skin is self-defeating because exposure to [ultraviolet radiation](#) -- either through tanning beds or by seeking the sun -- can lead to wrinkles, prematurely aging skin and even a diagnosis of skin cancer."

In order to encourage young women to embrace their natural skin color, the academy produced a television public service announcement that asks women to stop tanning. The academy has also launched a new SPOT Skin Cancer public awareness initiative that focuses on how people can protect themselves from skin cancer.

"The academy is committed to raising awareness of skin cancer prevention and helping young women understand that a tan is not beautiful, but a sign of irreversible [skin damage](#)," Draelos said. "If you want to be tan, use a spray tan -- which is a safe alternative to [tanning](#) by artificial or natural ultraviolet light."

Melanoma, the most deadly form of [skin](#) cancer, is the most common cancer for Americans aged 25 to 29, and the second most common cancer among those aged 15 to 29. Using [tanning beds](#) increases the risk of melanoma, especially in women aged 45 or younger.

May is Melanoma/[Skin Cancer](#) Detection and Prevention Month.

More information: The U.S. National Cancer Institute has more about [skin cancer prevention](#).

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