

Study identifies characteristics of sunbed users, motivation for tanning

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A telephone survey of 4,851 individuals in Germany suggests the overall prevalence of sunbed use was nearly 40 percent for participants who had ever used one and 14.6 percent had used a tanning bed within the last 12 months, according to a study published Online First by *Archives of Dermatology*.

Exposure to [UV radiation](#) (UVR) is one of the main [risk factors](#) for developing [skin cancer](#) and [tanning beds](#) are a common source of UVR. There also is evidence that the use of sunbeds significantly increases the risk of skin cancer, according to the study background.

Sven Schneider, Ph.D., M.A., of the Mannheim Institute of Public Health, Social and [Preventive Medicine](#), Heidelberg University, Mannheim, Germany, and colleagues sought to determine rates for sunbed use, investigate motivations for tanning, and identify targets for interventions to prevent skin cancer. A total of 4,851 individuals (ages 14 to 45 years old, 50.9 percent men) participated in the study, which included a nationwide telephone survey of the general population in Germany.

"The prevalence of ever use of sunbeds among the 14- to 45-year-olds in Germany was 39.2 percent, and every seventh person in this age group had used a sunbed during the last 12 months. A particularly large percentage of women, [adolescents](#), immigrants and the employed reported using solariums," the authors comment.

Compared with men, women were more likely to have ever used a sunbed (49 percent vs. 29.8 percent) or to be currently using sunbeds (17.7 percent vs. 11.7 percent). Ever and current sunbed use was also more prevalent in persons with skin type III to VI than in those individuals with paler skin (40.7 percent vs. 36.5 percent and 17.4 percent vs. 8.9 percent). Those with an immigrant background were significantly more likely to be currently using a sunbed (19.7 percent vs. 13.2 percent). The main motivations for tanning were relaxation and attractiveness, according to the study results.

"The present study presents target groups for future interventions: For example, such interventions could target occupations in which predominantly younger women work because the group of working women are particularly likely to use sunbeds. Furthermore, the relationship between current sunbed use and immigrant background indicates a specific need for the education of this population subgroup," the authors conclude.

Researchers also suggest their study findings emphasize the need for standardized education of sunbed personnel by independent institutions that are not associated with the sunbed industry. The authors note that personnel often fail to inform sunbed users that their motivations for tanning are not medically sound.

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