

One in three Americans has used tanning beds, upping skin cancer risk

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Global study finds similar numbers elsewhere, despite widespread knowledge of the dangers.

(HealthDay)—More than a third of all Americans—and nearly six out of 10 U.S. university students—have used indoor tanning, despite widespread knowledge that the devices contribute to skin cancer risk, a new study finds.

Researchers at the University of California, San Francisco, analyzed data from 88 surveys that included a total of more than 406,000 people in the United States, Europe and Australia.

They found that nearly 36 percent of people in the three regions had used [indoor tanning](#) in their lifetime. This included 55 percent of university students and 19 percent of teens.

In the United States, the rate of people who said they had used a tanning

bed was 35 percent, according to the study. For college students, that number rose to 59 percent, and 17 percent of adolescents in the United States and Canada said they had already been to a tanning salon.

The numbers were lower when Americans were asked if they had patronized indoor tanning within the past 12 months. In that case, 13 percent of adults, 43 percent of university students and 10 percent of adolescents had used indoor tanning, according to the study, which was published online Jan. 29 in the journal *JAMA Dermatology*.

"Exposure to indoor tanning is common in Western countries, especially among young persons," said the researchers, led by UCSF's Mackenzie Wehner.

Two skin cancer experts said the numbers are disheartening, since ultraviolet light exposure from indoor tanning is known to cause [skin cancer](#).

"It is appalling how often exposure to indoor tanning takes place in presumably educated populations and particularly worrisome that we allow adolescents to be exposed to this carcinogen," said Dr. Mark Lebwohl, chairman of the department of dermatology at Mount Sinai Hospital in New York City.

"We must do a much better job at educating people of all ages about the risks of indoor tanning," said Lebwohl, who is also incoming president-elect of the American Academy of Dermatology.

Dr. Doris Day, a dermatologist at Lenox Hill Hospital in New York City, agreed.

"Over 1 million people visit tanning salons each day in the United States," she said. "Sadly, the majority of these are young girls and teens.

Greater resources and studies are needed to help educate, and to decrease the use of tanning salons and help change the sentiment that a tanned look is more beautiful."

More information: The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has more about [indoor tanning](#).

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