

Indoor tanning still accessible to young people—despite bans

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Despite legislation prohibiting the use of ultraviolet (UV) indoor tanning facilities by minors, one in every five tanning salons in US states where such bans are in place stated over the phone that they would allow an underaged caller to do so. Many others provide inaccurate health information about indoor tanning, says Leah Ferrucci, of the Yale School of Public Health in the US. She led a study in Springer's journal *Translational Behavioral Medicine*.

Research has shown that indoor [tanning](#) increases a person's risk of developing different types of [skin](#) cancer. In the US alone, up to 400 000 skin cancer cases are attributed to indoor tanning. The risk of contracting the disease is higher for people who have been using such facilities frequently from a young age. Effort is therefore made to raise awareness about possible dangers among young people, while some states and cities have introduced bans prohibiting minors from using indoor tanning facilities.

Ferrucci's team set out to assess compliance with these bans, and whether tanning salons provided accurate health information about the dangers and benefits attached to these services. To do so, research assistants posing as potential underaged clients phoned tanning salons in the states of Connecticut, New York, California, Delaware, Hawai'i, Illinois, Louisiana, Minnesota, Nevada, Oregon, Texas, Vermont, Washington, and the District of Columbia. These are states in which bans were in place prohibiting people younger than either 17 or 18 years from using indoor tanning facilities at the time the research was

conducted.

"While most businesses followed the indoor tanning ban when a minor called, one-fifth did not. Many stated inaccurate health claims," Ferrucci explains.

Of the 412 respondents, 19.9 percent stated they would provide the service to the minor caller. Fifty-one (12.4 percent) respondents replied with an outright "yes", while 31 (7.5 percent) said that it depended, or that a minor could do so with permission from an authorized health professional or guardian. Businesses located in the Southern parts of the US had the lowest compliance, with 28.7 percent willing to let a minor use their services. Compliance was highest (87.9 percent) in states where bans have been in place for at least two years.

It was further found that some tanning businesses provide false or misleading information about the health implications of indoor tanning. Vitamin D production, cosmetic reasons and treatment of skin diseases were commonly claimed as benefits, while 10 percent of respondents denied any dangers associated with the practice of [indoor tanning](#). Only 20.1 percent said it could potentially cause skin cancer.

"Enacting well-crafted age restriction laws to maximize compliance through enforcement of penalties on the state level and moving towards a national ban with similar accompanying strong enforcement as proposed by many national and international [health](#) organizations are essential to reduce [skin cancer](#) risk in the vulnerable youth population," she adds.

More information: Courtney C. Choy et al, Compliance with indoor tanning bans for minors among businesses in the USA, *Translational Behavioral Medicine* (2017). [DOI: 10.1007/s13142-017-0510-4](https://doi.org/10.1007/s13142-017-0510-4)

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