

Surgeon General: Indoor, outdoor tanning must stop

BY ALICIA AULT

The U.S. Surgeon General's office is calling on Americans to do more to help prevent skin cancer, saying that it is a growing public health problem.

The five-point call to action singled out UV light exposure – from indoor and outdoor tanning – as a major culprit in the growing incidence of all cancers, and melanoma in particular.

"Tanned skin is damaged skin," Acting Surgeon General Boris D. Lushniak, a dermatologist, said at a briefing to release the report.

"When people tan or get sunburned, they increase their risk of getting skin cancer later in life," he said, adding that the nation needs to



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DR. LUSHNIAK

change its cultural acceptance of tanning as a sign of health.

The report noted that about 5 million Americans are treated for skin cancer each year, at a cost of \$8 billion. Melanoma is of the greatest concern; its incidence has tripled in the past 3 decades, with 63,000 new cases per year. Some 9,000 Americans die from melanoma each year, and death rates are on the rise in men, Dr. Howard Koh, assistant secretary for health at the Department of Health & Human Services, said at the briefing.

Both Dr. Koh and Dr. Lushniak singled out indoor tanning as particularly dangerous. The report cited research showing that indoor tanning may be associated with more than 400,000 cases of skin cancer, including 6,000 melanomas, per year.

Forty-four states and the District of Columbia have some type of indoor tanning laws or regulations. Eleven states prohibit indoor tanning by individuals under age 18. But indoor tanning remains popular: One in three white women aged 16-25 years engages in indoor tanning each year, according to the report.

In May, the Food and Drug Administration issued stricter rules for sunlamps used with indoor tanning, requiring a boxed warning that they should not be used on anyone younger than 18 years.

The five main points in the Sur-

geon General's call to action are:

► Increase opportunities for sun protection in outdoor settings, such as increasing shade in recreational areas, and providing more protection for school children and outdoor workers.

► Give individuals information to make informed, healthy choices about UV exposure, including providing materials in workplaces and schools, and partnering with physicians and health systems.

► Promote policies that advance the goal of preventing skin cancer, such as encouraging electronic reporting of reportable skin cancers.

► Reduce harms from indoor tanning by enforcing existing laws and

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considering additional restrictions.
► Strengthen research, surveillance, monitoring, and evaluation.

The American Academy of Dermatology Association applauded the report. "The American public needs to be aware that the dangers of ultraviolet radiation exposure are real," Dr. Brett M. Coldiron, president of

the AADA, said in a statement. "The AADA is particularly pleased that the HHS and the Office of the Surgeon General have highlighted methods for the public to prevent skin cancer in this white paper."

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One in three white women aged 16-25 years engages in indoor tanning each year, according to the Surgeon General's report.

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References: 1. Fluzone High-Dose vaccine [Prescribing Information]. Swiftwater, PA: Sanofi Pasteur Inc.; 2013. 2. Monto AS, Ansaloni F, Aspinall R, et al. Influenza control in the 21st century: optimizing protection of older adults. *Vaccine*. 2009;27:5043-5053. 3. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Interim results: state-specific influenza vaccination coverage—United States, August 2010-February 2011. *MMWR*. 2011;60(22):737-743.


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