

# Tanning beds definitely cause cancer

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Similar to the decades-long controversy surrounding health risks of cigarettes, with doctors warning of cancer risks and industry lobbyists denying them, it has taken a long over-due statement from the World Health Organization (WHO) to confirm what many people already knew, and ignored: Tanning beds cause cancer.

The International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), part of the WHO, has moved ultraviolet emitting tanning beds to its highest cancer risk category, ranking them among cigarettes, arsenic, and asbestos as posing the greatest threat of cancer to humans.

Previously classified as "probably carcinogenic to humans," the IARC recently reclassified UV-emitting tanning devices, such as sun lamps and tanning beds, as "carcinogenic to humans." This decision was based on a meta-analysis of about 20 studies showing that tanning bed use before age 30 raises a person's risk of skin melanoma by 75 percent. The report, published in *The Lancet Oncology*, also noted that control studies showed consistent evidence of a positive association between the use of tanning devices and ocular melanoma.

I think it is wonderful that cancer experts and researchers are finally confirming and declaring the incredible harmful effects of tanning bed use, especially since just a few years ago it was considered "safer than sun tanning."

Skin cancer advocacy groups and nonprofits such as the [Melanoma Research Foundation](#) issued statements applauding the reclassification of tanning beds, and the [Skin Cancer Foundation](#) has a full page of [tips and facts on tanning risks](#).

The CURE summer 2005 cover story, "[The Dark Side of the Sun](#)," explains the risks and harmful effects of all types of radiation and another article, "[Seeing the Light](#)," tells the story of a melanoma survivor and former bodybuilder now working her way around the country educating people about the dangers of tanning beds.

You can read about a new melanoma nonprofit and find tips on sun safety and skin cancer prevention in CURE's April 2009 [Skin Cancer eNews](#). You can also check out CURE's [Skin Cancer page](#) for more on prevention, treatment, and survivorship.

Other news stories on this subject: Reuters: [Sunbeds join cigarettes as top cancer threat](#)

American Cancer Society: [Tanning beds pose serious cancer risk, agency says](#)