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May is Skin Cancer Detection and Prevention Month

Studies show indoor tanning puts high school students, college age adults at higher risk

LANSING, Mich. – While high school students are not using indoor tanning salons as much as they have in the past, exposure to sunlight and indoor ultraviolet (UV) rays still puts many young adults at risk for developing skin cancer – the second most common cancer in women between 20 and 29 years of age. In an effort to raise awareness and reduce exposure to UV rays, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) is recognizing May as Skin Cancer Detection and Prevention Month.

According to a report highlighted by *Science Daily* and published in *JAMA Dermatology*, about 20 percent of females still engaged in indoor tanning at least once during 2013 and about 10 percent used an indoor tanning device 10 or more times during the year. This study indicated that indoor tanning was most common among non-Hispanic white girls. Among male students, slightly more than five percent engaged in indoor tanning and two percent engaged in frequent indoor tanning.

Despite the common misconception that indoor tanning is safer than exposure to sunlight, indoor tanning poses immediate risks and can cause skin cancer including melanoma, the deadliest type of skin cancer. Because people who begin indoor tanning during adolescence or early adulthood have a higher risk of getting skin cancer, indoor tanning is particularly dangerous for youth.

A related study based on a list of the top 125 colleges compiled by U.S. News & World Report, found that 48 percent of colleges have indoor tanning facilities either on campus or in off-campus housing. While other studies have examined the tanning habits of college students, this study was unique in that it focused on the availability of tanning salons on or near college campuses:

- Indoor tanning was available on campus in 12 percent of colleges
- Indoor tanning was available in off-campus housing at 42.4 percent of colleges
- About 14 percent of colleges allowed campus cash cards to be used to pay for tanning services
- Most off-campus housing facilities with indoor tanning provide it free to tenants
- Midwestern colleges had the highest prevalence of indoor tanning on campus – nearly 27 percent.

MDHHS is encouraging universities and college students to raise awareness around the dangers associated with indoor tanning, and to consider policy-related action steps.

In addition to UV exposure, risk factors for melanoma include family history of skin cancer, fair skin, and certain types of moles. Contact your doctor if you have concerns. For more information, visit www.michigan.gov/cancer or www.cdc.gov/cancer/skin.

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