

Indoor tanning: Women say no to total ban, yes to stricter policies

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Most young adult women who regularly visit indoor tanning salons support the introduction of policies to make it safer, but are against a total ban. This is according to a study led by Darren Mays of Georgetown University Medical Center in the US, in the journal *Translational Behavioral Medicine: Practice, Policy, Research*, published by Springer. The findings are good news for regulators who are finalizing stricter regulations aimed at highlighting the skin cancer risks associated with artificial tanning.

Skin cancer is the most common malignancy in the US, with more than 3.5 million new cases being diagnosed annually. Most skin cancers are preventable by reducing a person's exposure to ultraviolet radiation - either from the sun or from the intentional use of [indoor tanning](#) facilities. The latter account for an estimated 10 percent of all annual [skin cancer](#) cases in the US.

By 2015 more than 40 US states had already taken active steps to address this public health concern by introducing stricter regulations to limit indoor tanning, especially among minors. New regulations issued by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) have seen tanning devices reclassified as moderate to high-risk medical devices. The FDA also has a set of new regulations on the cards that highlight the health risk associated with indoor tanning.

As part of efforts to assess the level of public [support](#) for such policies, confidential self-report online surveys were completed by 356 non-Hispanic women in Washington DC. They were all between the ages of 18 and 30 years old and had indoor tanned at least once in the past year. They were asked about how regularly they did so, their attitudes, perceptions and beliefs towards the practice and how they felt about new policies being proposed to regulate the industry.

The results show a high level of support for

prevention policies similar to those that have recently been proposed for national enactment by the FDA. Three in every four participants (74 percent) supported policies to prevent children younger than 18 years from indoor tanning. About the same number of women (77.6 percent) were also in favor of stronger health warnings being placed on the tanning devices themselves. Support for a total ban on the practice was however very low, with only one in every ten participants backing such a notion. Countries like Australia and Brazil have already banned indoor tanning.

"Non-Hispanic white young adult women who indoor tan, the primary consumers of indoor tanning and a high-risk population, largely support indoor tanning prevention policies implemented by many state governments and those currently under review for national enactment," says Mays. "Given the low levels of support for a total indoor tanning ban, support for other potential policies such as increasing the minimum age to 21 should be investigated to inform future steps to reduce indoor tanning and the associated health risks."

More information: Darren Mays et al, Support for indoor tanning policies among young adult women who indoor tan, *Translational Behavioral Medicine* (2016). [DOI: 10.1007/s13142-016-0432-6](https://doi.org/10.1007/s13142-016-0432-6)

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