

Buying into danger



Suggested year level

Years 9 and 10

Prepare yourself (teacher)

View the clip ***Dangers of a deadly tan*** and familiarise yourself with the ideas presented.

Note: This segment focuses on a young Melbourne woman, Clare Oliver, who was diagnosed with melanoma at the age of 22. She wanted to tell her story to make people aware of the dangers of solariums because she attributed her melanoma to her solarium use. Clare died, aged 26 in 2007. Her determination to ensure the industry became regulated will have lasting legacy.

Some useful information. Solariums use artificial UVA and UVB radiation. Both are known to be directly responsible for causing skin cancer and prematurely ageing skin. An international review (IARC 2006) of studies on sunbed use found increased risks of melanoma and squamous cell carcinoma among users, in particular those exposed to sunbeds before the age of 35 years.

Class resources

- Computer, data projector and screen to show the Dangers of a deadly tan clip.
- Student access to a computer with internet connection.

Estimated time required

1 period



The activity

View the clip ***Dangers of a deadly tan*** and complete the following questions:

- 1 Solariums emit radiation up to six times as strong as the midday sun. What advice or information was Clare provided with before using the solarium?

2 Marks

- 2** Health experts say that solariums are dangerous. From your understanding and the information presented in the clip, why is this so?

2 Marks

- 3** The solarium operator provided some reasons for using his product. List those highlighted in the clip.

2 Marks

- 4** Recall the list of procedures carried out by the solarium operator before a client uses the sunbed.

2 Marks

- 5** In your view, what was the impact of Clare's death on her family? Community?

2 Marks

Total / 10



Extend yourself

Read the article [Buying into danger](#).

Buying into danger



DIY danger ... sunbeds need to be properly maintained or they could start emitting more radiation than they should, warned the Cancer Council NSW.

Struggling solarium operators are offloading unwanted sunbeds online, prompting calls for a government buyback of the machines to prevent dangerous in-home tanning.

The powerful units are being sold for as little as \$200 as the industry faces collapse owing to regulations restricting the use of solariums.

For people under the age of 35, using sunbeds – which emit ultraviolet radiation through fluorescent lamps – increases their risk of forming a melanoma by 98 per cent. There are

fears a rise in the popularity of home sunbeds will lead to more cases of skin cancer as people tan without supervision.

A professor of public health at the University of Sydney, Simon Chapman, said it would be a “public service” for state governments to buy the machines at the low market price and destroy them, or to outlaw reselling them.

“The biggest risks are for young people in their teens and early 20s. Because it’s not a commercial premise you could use the thing as much as you wanted,” Professor Chapman said. “They’re completely outside the reach of any regulation or inspection and that’s a real problem.”

In NSW solarium owners say they have been left in the dark about a government plan to support them as they face the loss of their livelihoods once the ban on commercial tanning units starts, at the end of 2014.

When the ban was announced in February, the government said it would help them dispose of the tanning units and diversify their businesses. But Fiona Gamble, from Soleil Tanning in Darlinghurst, said she had found it difficult to get answers from the Environment Protection Authority.

“I know a lot of salon owners have been trying to seek clarification from the Environment Minister Robyn Parker but they are very bad at returning phone calls,” she said.

Ms Gamble said the industry was regulated at present “but if you are using a sunbed at home and you don’t know what you’re doing, you could be at risk”.

The chief executive of the Cancer Council NSW, Andrew Penman, urged consumers not to buy a tanning unit for home use.

“Private use is up to the discretion of the individual but private use in the home does not make it any more safe than use in a solarium,” he said.

“I would be very concerned about whether the machines are being properly maintained. If the machine is not maintained, the radiation output could become variable and it would be difficult for the individual to monitor that.”

In Victoria under-18s are banned from tanning

salons and operators are forced to display health warnings or face \$1 million fines.

Since the 2008 laws came in, the number of outlets has plummeted 67 per cent from 436 to 143 salons. Along with the NSW government’s ban in 2014, many in the industry are offloading sunbeds on sites such as eBay, Gumtree and Trading Post.

The former head of the Australian Solarium Association, Mark Konemann, has sold two machines on eBay in the past fortnight for \$1000 each. The buyers planned to use the sunbeds at home. “Some of these beds are worth \$15,000 to \$20,000 and I’ve seen some online being sold for \$500 or less,” Mr Konemann said. “This is very powerful equipment and these commercial machines can do some damage if you don’t follow the rules. You’re going to get idiots who will use them all day and burn themselves silly

“When people come into a salon they have forms to sign, there are warning signs and it’s controlled but at home there are no controls.”

Craig Sinclair, of Cancer Council Victoria, said it would be critical for governments to consider limiting the supply of sunbeds to the domestic market “so that we don’t just shift the problem away from appropriately trained personnel supervising them to home use”.

But Mr Konemann said a ban would not deter people. “Solarium people won’t go and get a spray tan. Most of them have used these machines for years. They know they get a good tan, they don’t get burnt and it’s convenient so they’ll be snapping up these machines online.”

Read more: www.smh.com.au/national/health/buying-into-danger-20120630-219e4.html

Respond to the following questions.

1. NSW has introduced a ban on solariums from 2014. Why are current solarium operators trying to 'offload' the tanning units (sunbeds) before this date?
2. Using sunbeds before the age of 35 years, increases the risk of melanoma by what percentage?
3. Why will home use sunbeds potentially further increase the incidence of skin cancer?
4. What suggestions are made to reduce the number of individuals buying the units for home use?
5. List the concerns of home use as outlined by Andrew Penman.
6. Mark Konemann is a solarium operator. He maintains that tanning sunbeds are dangerous unless supervised. What are his fears?
7. Mr Konemann maintains that his clients sign forms, see health warnings and that the machines are 'controlled'. What does this tell you about the operator? Why then do you think there is such a serious health risk associated with using these products?



Teacher assessment advice

To assess the question and answer activity, use the allocated marking scheme.