New Report Reveals Indoor Tanning Industry's False and Misleading Prac

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Today Reps. Henry A. Waxman, Diana DeGette, Frank Pallone, Jr., Rosa L. DeLauro, and Carolyn B. Maloney released a report prepared by the minority staff of the Committee on Energy and Commerce, describing the false and misleading health information provided to teens by the indoor tanning industry. The report, based on undercover interviews of tanning salon employees conducted by Committee investigators, finds that tanning salons target teenage girls with advertising and promotions, deny known risks of indoor tanning, provide false information on benefits of tanning, and fail to follow recommendations by the Food and Drug Administration on tanning frequency.

"We know that indoor tanning significantly increases skin cancer risks -- especially for teens," said Rep. Waxman, Ranking Member of the Committee on Energy and Commerce. "Our report finds that the vast majority of tanning salons deny the known risks of indoor tanning and falsely claim that it is beneficial to a young person's health. Tanning salons should not be putting young women's health at risk by providing them with false and misleading information."

"I am deeply disturbed by the findings of this investigation, both for the deceitful and misleading practices it uncovered, and because that deceit is placing young girls on a path to a deadly cancer," said Rep. DeGette, Ranking Member of the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations. "From providing inaccurate information to disregarding federal safety recommendations, the systemic dishonesty of the indoor tanning industry is likely causing grave concern for parents across America, and it must be stopped."

"This investigative report brings light to some startling information about how tanning salons are providing misleading information to young teens," said Rep. Pallone, Ranking Member of the Subcommittee on Health. "Health risks are not being accurately relayed, while health benefits are being falsely claimed. Plain and simple, this is a public health issue that deserves the attention of our Committee."

"Skin cancer is the second most common form of cancer in America, and we know that studies indicate there is a 75% increase in the risk of melanoma for indoor tanning users. These statistics are frightening to anyone, and frustrating to me as a survivor of ovarian cancer, because this is one of the few cancers for which a preventative option truly exists," said Rep. DeLauro. "The American public should be aware of the potential health risks from tanning beds, and yet, as this report shows, the overwhelming majority of tanning salons misrepresent their danger."

"Tanning beds are brightly lit, cancer-causing coffins -- plain and simple," said Rep. Maloney. "This report shows that teenage girls are being targeted by the tanning industry and as a result, melanoma is now the most common form of cancer among young adults 25-29 years old and is one of the fastest growing cancers in the United States and worldwide. We can no longer ignore the startling health effects of indoor tanning. I thank Reps. Waxman and DeGette for highlighting this troubling health problem."

Committee investigators representing themselves as fair-skinned teenage girls surveyed 300 tanning salons nationwide, including at least three in each state and the District of Columbia. The investigators questioned each salon about the benefits and risks of indoor tanning, how frequently customers could use tanning beds, and about any discounts for students or teens.

The report finds that:

- Nearly all of the salons denied the known risks of tanning. Ninety percent of the salons stated that indoor tanning did not pose a health risk, while over half of the salons denied that indoor tanning would increase the risk of skin cancer.
- Nearly 80% of the salons asserted that indoor tanning would be beneficial to the health of a fair-skinned teenage girl. Several salons asserted that indoor tanning would prevent cancer.
- Tanning salons fail to follow FDA recommendations on tanning frequency. Three-quarters of salons allow customers to tan daily, despite FDA recommendations that indoor tanning be limited to no more than three visits in the first week.
- Salons used many approaches to downplay the health risks of indoor tanning. Salons stated that young people are not at risk for developing skin cancer; that rising rates of skin cancer are linked to increased use of sunscreen; that government regulators had certified the safety of indoor tanning; and that "it's got to be safe, or else they wouldn't let us do it." Salons also frequently referred the investigators to industry websites that downplay indoor tanning's health

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risks and tout the practice's alleged health benefits.

• Tanning salons target teenage girls in their advertisements. Print and online advertising to teenage and college-aged girls frequently offers student discounts and "prom," "homecoming," and "back-to-school" specials.

Related Documents:

False and Misleading Health Information Provided to Teens by the Indoor Tanning Industry.

Download (sites/default/files/documents/Tanning Investigation Report 2.1.12.pdf)

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