

Opinion



GETTY IMAGES

A resolution for 2020: Avoid tanning beds



Your Turn

Heather Foley

Guest columnist

2020! A new year! A new decade! A fresh start!

Traditions of the New Year include a time to begin resolutions. Some of the many resolutions include getting into losing weight and getting into shape, shedding the “holiday bulk.”

Gym memberships are at their peak this time of year and advertise a variety of membership packages. Some often include indoor tanning devices such as sun lamps, tanning beds and tanning booths. Getting in shape offers many health benefits, however; indoor tanning does not. Indoor tanning devices give off a known carcinogen: ultraviolet (UV) radiation.

UV radiation can cause skin cancer; three of the most common types of skin cancer — basal cell carcinoma, squamous cell carcinoma, and the deadliest form, melanoma — have been linked to indoor tanning. Indoor tanning devices give off high levels of artificial UV radiation in a shorter amount of time than sun exposure in a natural outdoor environment — thus, resulting in a more intense and dangerous UV radiation exposure than natural sunlight. Overexposure to any UV rays, including artificial or natural exposure, increases your risk of developing skin cancer.

Exposure to UV radiation from either too much sun or artificial tanning can cause early aging, skin dam-

age and lead to skin cancer. Be mindful that UV radiation exposure is also reflected by sand, water, snow and ice. Getting a “base tan” is a myth; wearing goggles to protect your eyes is a myth.

Unfortunately, melanoma is becoming more common every year in New York state and nationally. This skin cancer does not discriminate; anyone can develop melanoma, and it can appear anywhere — head to toe, nails, eyes and all parts in between. If caught early, it can be treated, but it is aggressive and can spread to organs, causing death. Scary, yes. True, absolutely. In fact, there is a correlation between starting indoor tanning at earlier age, and increased risk of developing melanoma.

That is why New York state law prohibits the use of tanning beds for minors under the age of 18. UHS and the Broome County Community Action Prevention in Action team have partnered to bring awareness to this law. For more information, visit takeactionagainst-cancer.com.

If you are going to make a New Year’s resolution, start the New Year off right! Avoid indoor tanning. Protect your skin. Wear protective clothing (hats are stylish!), wear sunglasses (also stylish!), apply broad spectrum sunscreen SPF 30 or higher and re-apply every two hours.

Most important, it is recommended to have annual skin cancer surveillance by a trained skin cancer professional; it can save your life!

Heather Foley, FNP-BC, is a registered nurse first assistant with UHS Plastic Surgery.