



A STUDY FROM LEEDS UNIVERSITY STATES “WE HAVE NOT FOUND ANY EVIDENCE OF A RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SUNBED USE AND MELANOMA RISK.”*

Over the years, various groups of researchers have tried in vain to establish a link between the use of sunbeds and the spread of melanoma and the media have always been more than willing to add more fuel to the fires of anxiety engendered by this topic. However, we often forget that UV exposure is crucial if the body is to maintain an adequate level of vitamin D.

Led by Faye Elliott, a high-level team of scientists from the University of Leeds has spent years researching the link between UV radiation and melanoma. The team carried out a study involving around 1,000 participants aged between 16 and 76, who had all been diagnosed with melanoma. The results were then compared with those of a healthy control group. In addition to a wide range of information such as skin type and family predisposition, all study participants were asked when they first used a sunbed, how often they use sunbeds and how long they spend in the sun.

This study showed no evidence for sunbed use as a risk factor for melanoma in the UK although official advice contradicts these claims. Other studies have made contradictory claims which add to the confusion on this issue. It should be borne in mind that all reports on this subject emphasised the difficult nature of the subject due to factors affecting the results such as sun exposure, skin type, age, moles and recall bias.

When it comes to UV exposure – whether from the sun or a sunbed – it’s all a question of how much. In today’s competitive society, where people spend more time at their desks than outside in the fresh air, moderate exposure to sunlight or from sunbeds can help to boost vitamin D levels. This is particularly helpful during those months when there is very little natural sunlight around, in other words between September to April.