

Tan now, but cancer may be closer than you think

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Staff Reporter

When you look around at the orange faces of the teen population you can't help but wonder whether they are prime candidates for melanoma and other skin cancers, wrinkles, and/or sagging skin.

Nearly 2.3 million American teenagers visit tanning salons on a regular basis. Researchers who have been concerned for years are intensifying their research. Most people who tan do not understand the effects tanning will have on them later. Salons may be one cause of the problem.

"They tell you not to wear sunscreen—just these special oils they make you buy at the tanning salons," Josie Sells, senior, said. I

If you talk to people who work in tanning salons you will hear the common myth about "base tans." The evidence does not support a protective effect of the use of tanning beds against damage to the skin from sun exposure. There are no safe tans, normal or via tanning booths. When skin tans it is because it has been

damaged.

Tanning seems to be acceptable to many parents and teens. Even sports teams are supporting tanning. Last year the Softball Team sold punch cards to tanning salons in an effort to raise money.

"I believe as a community we need to foster healthy living. By putting green and gold on the tanning punch cards or advertisements it could mean West Linn is sponsoring this and supporting this," Dede Montgomery, WLHS parent and Occupational Health and Safety Specialist, at the Center for Research on Occupational and Environmental Toxicology at Oregon Health and Sciences University, said.

Most people are unaware of how dangerous the effects are of tanning. Based on seven worldwide studies, people who first use a tanning bed before age 35 increase their risk for melanoma by 75 percent. The UVA rays in tanning booths are two to three times more powerful than those of the sun.

Melanoma is the most dangerous type of skin cancer

and strikes more than 59,000 people in the U.S. each year and kills more than 7,000. Melanoma is becoming more common in the U.S. and other countries around the world, according to World Health Organization statistics, and the popularity of tanning and tanning beds is part of the reason.

"This may not mean much to a high school student, but when they are 30 their skin may look much older with much more wrinkling of the skin—on the face especially. Cheeks begin to sag as does the skin around the eyes. Not very pretty to think about," Marilyn Ellwood, District nurse, said.

There's more evidence on the hazards of tanning beds. Baking under their artificial lamps as little as once a month can boost your risk of a deadly form of skin cancer by 55 percent. The danger is even greater when done in childhood and early adulthood.

Tanning

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My sister accidentally killed herself.

She died of skin cancer.

Most people think skin cancer happens to other people.

But it's actually the most common of all cancers. Left unchecked, skin cancer can be fatal.

The good news, it's almost always curable if you catch it early. Start now.

Make sun safety a way of life.

Use sunscreen, cover up and watch for skin changes.

Hope. Progress. Answers.® / 1-800-ACS-2345 / www.cancer.org



A public service announcement from the American Cancer Society warns of the dangers of melanoma. Campaigns like this one from 2007 are meant to inform younger people that those who first use a tanning bed before age 35 increase their risk for melanoma by 75 percent according to seven worldwide studies.



"The overload seriously cuts into my beauty sleep."

—Jeff Houston, senior

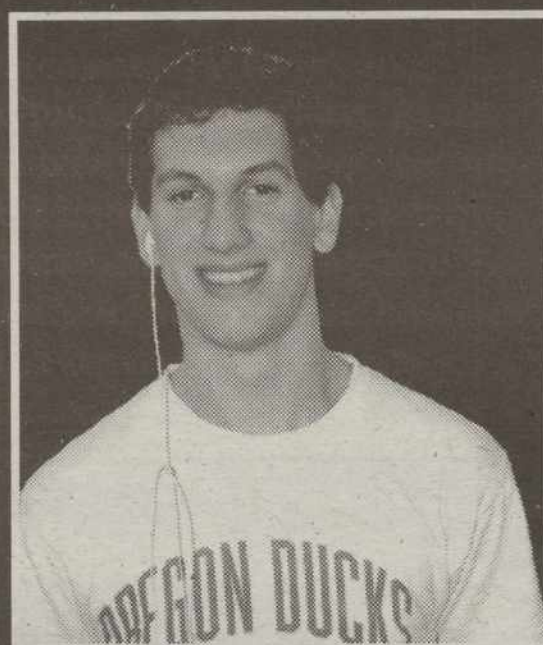
"At least two hours, at the most four hours, unless we have projects, then you have to pull all nighters."

—Emmale Cox, junior



STUDENTS SPEAK OUT

How big is your homework load each night, and how much does it affect your sleep?

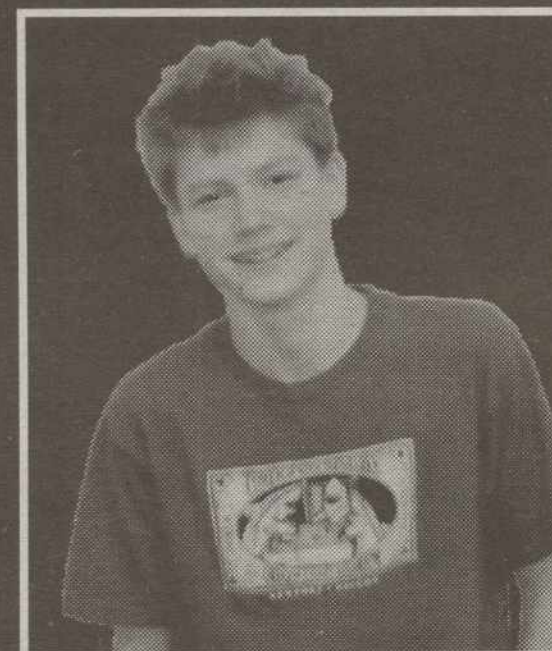


"My homework load isn't really too bad. I get about 7-8 hours of sleep a night."

—Justin McKee, sophomore

"It's way too much for my busy schedule and I am constantly stressed that I can't get enough done."

—Ryan Plerson, freshman



Photos by Avery Breyne-Cartwright and Ty Clarke