

Solaria, saunas, flotation tanks and gymnasiums

Client health information

Under the current *Health Act 1958* solaria, saunas, flotation tanks and gymnasiums do not require registration with local government.

This fact sheet has been produced to allow those considering using the above services to make informed decisions about their usage of such facilities.

Solaria

A solarium is used to tan the skin by radiating it with a concentrated dose of ultraviolet light.

Risks of solaria include:

- Exposure to ultraviolet radiation such as from a sun-tanning unit contributes to the skin ageing process and may cause skin cancer.
- People with fair skin and who are unable to tan should not use a sun-tanning unit.
- Intentional exposure to sunlight or a sun-tanning unit should be avoided for 48 hours after sun-tanning exposure.
- Protective goggles should be worn at all times while undergoing sun-tanning unit exposure.

Operator requirements

Current best practice standards (The Australian/New Zealand Standard: Solaria for Cosmetic Purposes AS/NZS 2635:2002) sets out guidelines for the installation, maintenance and operation of solaria and seeks to increase the levels of safety associated with their use.

These standards recommend:

- A consent form be given to the client to sign. This consent form should outline the risks involved in the procedure.
- Claims of non-cosmetic health benefits should not be made in the promotion of sun-tanning unit use.
- Individuals with skin type 1 (fair skin, which always burns, never tans and is often accompanied by red hair and freckles) should not be allowed to use a sun-tanning unit.
- Any part of a surface of a sun-tanning unit that is subject to body contact, including protective goggles, should either be cleaned and disinfected or, if disposable, completely replaced after each use of the solarium unit.

- Under these standards, it is recommended that children under 15 years of age are banned from using solaria altogether, while those aged 15 to 18 years should have parental consent.

Saunas

Having a sauna involves a process where water is splashed on heated stones to raise the humidity level to as much as 40%, and creates hot dry air.

The main risk relates to the surface of the sauna.

Operator requirements

Current best practice guidelines recommend that:

- Operators should ensure that surfaces are kept clean. Only non-abrasive cleaners should be used.
- Clients should be provided with clean towels prior to entry and advised to cover the surfaces with a towel prior to lying down. Once used, towels should be laundered and stored in a clean environment.

Flotation tanks

This treatment involves the patient lying in a sound proof tank of water. The water has salts and minerals dissolved into it, which enables the body to float.

The main risk of infection is the salt water that is reused between clients.

Operator requirements

Current best practice standards recommend that:

- Operators should ensure that both internal and external surfaces are kept clean using non-abrasive cleaners to remove scum and to prevent corrosion caused by splashing of the highly concentrated salt water.
- Regular maintenance should involve checking the filters.
- When applying 'Vaseline', or other oils/creams to protect the skin from the concentrated salt water, appropriate dispensing procedures should be used.

Gymnasium equipment

Bacteria such as *Staphylococcus aureus* or 'golden staph' can cause conjunctivitis and skin infections when transferred from inadequately cleaned equipment and reusable towels.

Infection spread is assisted by the reuse of a single towel for cleaning, or for the use of the gymnasium user's own towel to wipe down equipment.

Operator requirements

Current best practice standards recommend that:

- The owner should ensure that daily cleaning of the gymnasium environment and its equipment takes place. This is important to prevent the spread of infection and provide a safe environment for users and staff. Additional cleaning is required immediately when any person has sweated profusely.
- If reusable towels are supplied they should be used once only and placed in a receptacle for laundering.

Alternative therapies

There is an abundance of alternative therapies including naturopathy, aromatherapy, myotherapy, homeopathy and ear candling. It is important for the client and the operator to consider all possible infection risks and to consult the relevant professional organisations for advice.

For further information contact your local council health department or the Communicable Disease Control Unit of the Department of Human Services on 1300 651 160.

www.health.vic.gov.au/ideas

July 2006