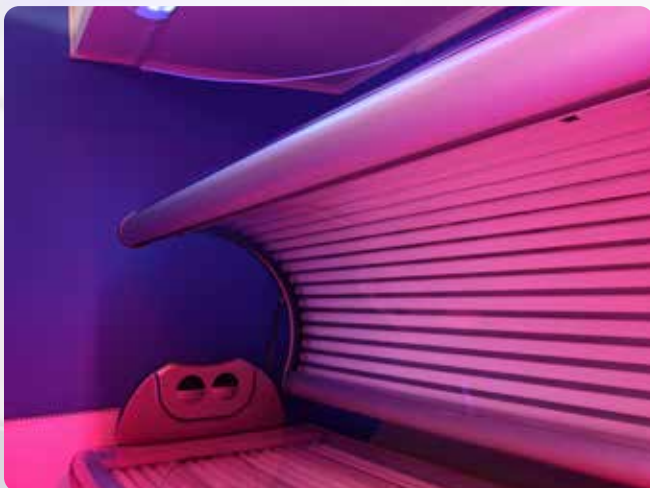


More than 200 cases of children illegally using sunbeds have been recorded across England, including one child aged just 10, raising fresh concerns about misleading claims that sunbeds can benefit skin conditions such as psoriasis.

The figures, uncovered through a Freedom of Information request, come as the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) banned adverts from five sunbed-related companies for suggesting their services were safe or could help treat medical conditions including psoriasis and eczema.

For people with psoriasis, this ruling is particularly important. While controlled ultraviolet (UV) light can be used as a medical treatment, known as phototherapy, under specialist supervision, commercial sunbeds are not a safe or effective substitute. The ASA found that claims promoting sunbeds as a health or treatment option were misleading and irresponsible.

Dr Conal Perrett, Consultant Dermatologist at The Devonshire Clinic, said the ruling was an important but overdue step in protecting the public from harmful misinformation: *"There is no such thing as safe tanning using UV radiation, and the science on this has been clear for decades,"* Dr Perrett said.



"When adverts suggest sunbeds are safe or imply health benefits, they fundamentally mislead people about the risks they are taking with their skin and their long-term health."

Health experts are clear that UV radiation is the main cause of skin cancer in the UK. Sunbeds deliver intense, uncontrolled doses that damage skin cell DNA and significantly increase the risk of melanoma, the most serious form of skin cancer.

For people with psoriasis, the distinction between medical phototherapy and sunbed use is critical:



- Phototherapy is carefully prescribed, with controlled doses and clinical monitoring.
- Sunbeds deliver inconsistent, often stronger UV exposure without medical oversight.
- Sunbeds do not target psoriasis safely and can worsen skin damage over time.

Dr Perrett warned that portraying sunbed use as a wellness or medical solution was particularly concerning: *"Claims that sunbeds can improve mood, or help manage medical conditions are inaccurate and risk discouraging people from seeking proper medical advice and evidence-based treatment,"* he added. *"That is why the ruling matters, it draws a clear line between health information and commercial promotion."*



The findings also highlight ongoing failures to enforce laws banning sunbed use by under-18s. Despite regulations, more than 200 incidents were recorded over 15 years, with limited penalties issued.

Beyond cancer risk, sunbed use can lead to severe burns, premature ageing, and long-term skin damage. These effects can complicate the management of psoriasis and overall skin health.

For those living with psoriasis and considering UV-based treatments, the safest approach is to:

Avoid commercial sunbeds entirely.

- Use approved treatments tailored to your condition.
- Speak to a GP or dermatologist about clinically supervised phototherapy.
- Consider safer cosmetic alternatives such as self-tanning products if appearance is a concern.

Finally, regular skin checks remain essential. People with psoriasis should not assume all skin changes are related to their condition. Watch for warning signs such as changes in moles, unusual new marks, or lesions that behave differently from your usual plaques.

Spotting melanoma early can save lives, so knowing what to look for is key. Here are five mole changes to watch out for:

1. **Uneven shape or border** – Moles that are asymmetrical or have blurred, jagged edges may need a closer look.
2. **Colour changes** – Be alert to moles with multiple shades of brown, black, red, or blue.
3. **Growth or evolution** – Any mole that's getting larger, changing shape, or starting to itch, bleed, or crust over should be assessed.
4. **The "odd one out"** – A mole that looks different from your others, the 'ugly duckling', could signal something new.
5. **New or unusual marks** – On darker skin, melanoma may appear on the palms, soles, or under nails. Any new dark patch in these areas deserves attention.

"If something looks or feels different, don't ignore it," says Dr Perrett. "Most skin changes are harmless, but when caught early, melanoma is highly treatable, so trust your instincts and get it checked."

Source:

Adapted from reporting in
The Independent, 28 January 2026.

Read our information on
*Psoriasis and Phototherapy and
Psoriasis and the sun.*