YOU'RE SO VAIN: NEW SURVEY SHOWS TEENS USE TANNING BEDS TO LOOK GOOD DESPITE KNOWING HEALTH RISKS

SCHAUMBURG, Ill. (May 16, 2011) – For many teens and young adults, living in the moment is all about having fun, looking good and not worrying about what tomorrow brings. But for young people who use tanning beds in their quest for that popular bronze look, this unhealthy behavior can result in an increased risk of skin cancer and premature aging, such as wrinkles. A new survey by the American Academy of Dermatology (Academy) found that Caucasian teen girls and young women who tan indoors do so for the sake of vanity despite knowing the health risks.

A vast majority (86 percent) of respondents who tan indoors knew that using tanning beds can cause skin cancer – yet they still reported using an indoor tanning bed in the last year. When asked if they think people look more attractive with a tan, a large percentage of respondents (66 percent) answered yes, especially indoor tanners (87 percent).

“It’s absurd that many people who indoor tan are doing it for cosmetic reasons because that tan can actually accelerate the aging process and can lead to melanoma – the deadliest form of skin cancer,” said dermatologist Ronald L. Moy, MD, FAAD, president of the Academy. “Teens often report feeling a sense of invincibility, which explains why their actions often do not mirror their knowledge of certain behaviors – like tanning.”

Ironically, despite the fact that ultraviolet radiation from tanning beds can lead to developing wrinkles sooner in life, indoor tanners were more concerned about wrinkles than their non-indoor tanning peers (42 percent vs. 28 percent,
respectively). Alarmingly, nearly one-half of respondents who have indoor tanned in the past year (48 percent) knew someone who has or has had skin cancer.

“Our survey confirms that teens are more concerned with their current looks than their future health, even though they realize that skin cancer is a risk factor of their behavior,” said Dr. Moy. “If this behavior trend continues and young women’s attitudes toward tanning do not change, future generations will develop more skin cancers earlier in life and the consequences can be fatal.”

May is Melanoma/Skin Cancer Detection and Prevention Month®. Visit www.melanomamonday.org to find “31 Days 31 Ways to prevent and detect melanoma,” download a body mole map or look for free skin cancer screenings in your area.

Headquartered in Schaumburg, Ill., the American Academy of Dermatology (Academy), founded in 1938, is the largest, most influential, and most representative of all dermatologic associations. With a membership of more than 17,000 physicians worldwide, the Academy is committed to: advancing the diagnosis and medical, surgical and cosmetic treatment of the skin, hair and nails; advocating high standards in clinical practice, education, and research in dermatology; and supporting and enhancing patient care for a lifetime of healthier skin, hair and nails. For more information, contact the Academy at 1-888-462-DERM (3376) or www.aad.org

About the “2011 Indoor Tanning: Teen and Young Adult Women” Survey

More than 3,800 white, non-Hispanic females ages 14 to 22 responded to a nationwide survey online to determine their tanning knowledge, attitudes and behavior. The survey was conducted by Relevant Research, Inc (formerly RH Research) of Chicago from December 28, 2010, to January 11, 2011. Data were weighted by age and region based on the US Census Current Population Survey (released in 2010).