



How to Set Up a Successful Tanning Salon

A tanning salon can be a very pleasant and profitable business to run, but the thought of how to set one up can be daunting. I've always been a strong believer in learning by other people's mistakes rather than waiting to make those mistakes yourself first, and with this guide you can! When I set up my first sunbed shop in 1984, there was nobody to advise me, and I've learned the hard way over the years how to do it, so with this guide, you don't have to.

You can also use this guide if you are considering installing just one sunbed in your gym, hair salon, hotel or leisure centre, the vast majority of the advice is still relevant.

Preparation setup...

Timescales

First and foremost, once you have your premises, (or sunbed room allocated) be generous with your estimate of how long it will take before you are ready to open, and then add at least a week on if you are installing one sunbed, or two weeks if it is a salon with several sunbeds. Electricians, plasterers and joiners all have their own businesses to run, and invariably encounter delays. The last thing you need is your sunbeds arriving when the rooms aren't ready. I have honestly not yet seen one open on the originally planned day.



Power requirements

Most people underestimate this, even some electricians if they haven't installed a sunbed previously. As a rough guide, a 200 Watt lamp uses about 1 Amp of electrical current, so a 40 tube 200 watt sunbed uses around 40 Amps, which equates to 9.6 Kilowatts. This means that the cable supplying power from your fuseboard to your sunbed room needs to be 10mm (size in cross sectional area) which is thicker than most shower or cooker cables. A 60 tube sunshower needs 16mm cable. Its amazing how many people think that the sunbed can be simply plugged in to a conventional socket! A 13 Amp plug has a maximum power capability of 3 Kilowatts before the fuse will blow.

What's more, a sunbed is what's called an inductive load. This means that when it starts up, it draws around 10 – 20% more current during the first few seconds, just like an electric motor. Many electricians do not realise this, and although it does not affect the cable size required, it does affect the size of the circuit breaker (fuse) in your fusebox. If the 40 tube (40 Amp) sunbed in the example above was supplied via a 45 Amp circuit breaker, it would trip out on start up, giving the impression that the sunbed was faulty.

There are two solutions: one is the obvious, to fit the next size up circuit breaker. Unfortunately, this is either 50 Amps, or 63 Amps. The wiring regulation do not recommend a 63 Amp breaker to protect a 10mm cable, as it results in a mismatch that can be potentially a fire hazard, so a 16mm cable would be required, which is much more expensive, and cumbersome to route through your shop due to its larger physical size.

The other option is to use a Type "C" circuit breaker in the fuseboard. Electricians call these 'motor start breakers' and these allow a higher initial start-up current to flow without tripping, as used on industrial electric motors. Problem solved!

Leisure Centres and hotel chains may also insist on having what is known as an RCD, or Residual Current Device fitted, also called RCB. This is similar to a circuit breaker and provides additional electric shock protection to the sunbed user. Whilst this is not yet mandatory in the Wiring Regulations, larger companies (and most suppliers of new commercial sunbeds) tend to insist on installing them to reduce the potential of electrocution. In our current litigation-crazy society, this is likely to become more common in the future, and so fitting a RCD is recommended

If you do fit RCD's to protect against this hazard, there is a technical anomaly that even your electrician will probably not be aware of. See '**Technical Notes for Your Electrician**' at the end of this guide.

Put simply, your sunbed power supply consists of a 50 Amp or 63 Amp circuit-breaker in your fusebox, a 10mm or 16mm cable running from this to your sunbed room, and connected to a wall mounted switch called a rotary isolator (Pictured)



Single phase or 3 phase?

All residential properties, and most small commercial properties are fitted with a single phase electrical supply. This is the standard 240 volt supply, as in your house. Older properties have a main fuse rated at 60/80 Amps, more modern ones have a 100 Amp fuse, which is the maximum. So you cannot run more than two sunbeds in your premises if it has the conventional single phase supply, otherwise you would blow the main fuse and have to call out the Utility (e.g. Scottish Power Manweb) to replace it, as the fuse is their property. This is the most frequent and fundamental issue overlooked by people that wish to open a tanning salon. Even then, a 60/80Amp fuse must be replaced by a 100 Amp fuse to run two sunbeds.

To run 3 or more sunbeds you need to pay the Utility to upgrade your supply to 3 Phase.

Typically this involves digging out a trench outside your shop, removing the existing single phase (2 core) cable supplying your property, replacing it with a heavier 3 phase (4 core) cable, and connecting it onto the main power cable under the pavement in the street outside your premises. It cannot be done by your electrician, only the Utility Company. It is neither quick nor cheap. Typical lead times from you ordering to it being fitted are around 8 weeks, and costs vary from free (occasionally) to £2000 - £3000. As long as you know this, you can allow for the delay when estimating your timescales and predicting your opening day.

There is a roundabout way to temporarily run 3 sunbeds at once on a single phase, provided that under no circumstances are all 3 sunbeds switched on at once. If you blow your (their) main fuse, you are at the mercy of the Utility in terms of how long it takes before they eventually turn up to replace it, and how much they decide to charge you. Meantime you have at least 3 customers cold and naked in the dark on your sunbeds, and no power to your shop! A scenario to be avoided at all costs, I think you'll agree.

Ventilation

If a sunbed is rated at 9.6 kilowatts, that means that it gives off as much heat as 9 one kilowatt electric plug-in heaters. The light energy from the UV lamps is a tiny percentage of the total output. This means you have a lot of heat that needs to be removed. Don't even think about simply using those oscillating fans used in offices, they will simply move the hot air around. The heat needs to be extracted from the building, and replaced with cool air. So many people open salons without even considering extraction, then are surprised to find that the sunbed rooms are unbearably hot after 3 or 4 customers. Worse, this heat makes the sunbed very unreliable and prone to breakdowns and electrical faults. Worse still, the UV output of a tanning lamp drops significantly if the lamp is running too hot! That's the last thing you need.

Most commercial sunbeds have a vent underneath or at the rear, which must be connected to a flexible ducting (around 7-10 inches in diameter) that must then connect to a vent on an outside wall. This forces the main fan in the sunbed to either draw in cool air from outside, or blow the hot air to the exterior of the building (depending on the direction of air flow set by the sunbed manufacturer). In addition, you need to provide a route for the same amount of cool air to enter the sunbed cubicle to replace it. This is often misunderstood, if no additional vents are provided to allow the extracted hot air to be replaced then no circulation can take place. The air must be allowed both in and out of the sunbed room. If you only have one vent, then an analogy is that its like trying to suck air out of a bottle.



The cheapest way is to fit large (12 inch) louvered vents (Pictured) to the door or cubicle walls, then fit more vents on outside walls elsewhere in the building to allow a way in for the replacement cool air. Another way is to fit a separate extractor fan on an outside wall in the sunbed room, set to draw air in.

Air conditioning is a nice luxury to have for summer, but should only be used in addition to the extraction system, not instead of it.

If you are only fitting one sunbed, you may get away without installing the extraction system provided the sunbed room is large, and has natural air flow. This can be achieved by having your studded walls finished about a foot short of the ceiling, or for better effect, around 6 inches short of the floor too.

One problem you will encounter when you open is customers who want "The hottest sunbed". They think that because the hotter the sun is, the quicker/better it tans them, then the same must be true of a sunbed. But the opposite is true, and you will find it a never-ending battle educating new customers of this fact. They are tanned only by the UV light output of the lamps. Nobody has yet made a lamp that does not also produce a large amount of heat, in fact most of the output from a lamp is useless heat, and useless visible light, none of which causes tanning. But as mentioned, failing to remove this heat actually reduces the UV output of the lamp, and so reduces its tanning ability. Of course, a certain amount of heat is required to create a warm comfortable experience for the customer, and I have to admit, I still keep one sunbed in my salons that runs hotter than the rest, reserved for those customers that cannot be convinced.

Running Costs

A 'unit' of electricity is 1 kilowatt hour, i.e. equivalent to running a 1000 Watt appliance for 1 hour, and costs around 8p. A 40 tube 200 watt sunbed uses 9.6 kilowatts so would cost around 77p to run for an hour. If you charge your customers £1 per 3 minutes (ie £2 for 6 mins, £3 for 9 mins) the sunbed takes £20 per hour. So your electricity costs are 77/2000 or 3.8% of your takings.

Lamps are normally replaced after 500 hours (*see lamp maintenance later in this guide*).

At, say, £10 per tube, the retube will cost around £500 including a service and maybe facial lamps, so this equates to costing you around £1 per hour in lamp usage, or another 5% of your takings.

These figures are a good starting point, but of course you need to consider many other factors such as depreciation of the sunbeds too, as you need to have some of your takings put to one side to eventually replace the sunbeds in maybe 3 years or so. As a rough guide, if you purchase new sunbeds they will cost around £6000 - £7,000. Unfortunately there is a similarity between sunbeds and cars, in that the residual value is very poor. Typically the used sunbeds would only fetch around £1000 on the open market after 3 years, or even less if sold to a trader. Even after only one year, used sunbeds sell for around 40% of their cost when new. So the depreciation of the sunbeds is not a factor to be overlooked, especially if you purchase them new.

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(Based on 50 tubes)**

Room sizes

Most sunbeds are at least 7 1/2 feet long, and around 3 1/2 to 4 ft wide. Absolute minimum room length is 8 ft, preferably 9ft, as the engineers will need space at each end of the sunbed to install it. The room width should be a minimum of 6ft, preferably 8ft to allow your customer room to dress and undress, and to prevent a claustrophobic feeling. In addition, the larger the room, the cooler it will be, and the less power you will need to use running your ventilation fans to extract the hot air produced by the sunbed.

For vertical tanning units (sunshowers) the minimum ceiling height is 8 1/2 ft, as the engineer often needs to climb on top to carry out repairs and servicing.

Should I buy, rent, lease-purchase or profitshare my sunbeds?

One way round this problem is to buy reconditioned sunbeds. Many companies specialise in supplying these, often with a guarantee. Those that are genuinely reconditioned from the reputable suppliers can hardly be distinguished from new, unless your customers get down on their hands and knees and inspect it. The lamps will be brand new, so it should have exactly the same tanning power as when it was new. Once you have accepted the idea that your customers return to your shop because they received a good tan, rather than because the sunbeds looked really nice, it becomes a no-brainer, so to speak. But make sure you either go to see the actual reconditioned sunbeds that you are buying prior to committing, or at least have the supplier email you Hi-Res pictures, and confirm that the product comes with some sort of guarantee. Used equipment does not usually carry a 12 month guarantee, but insist on at least 3 months parts and labour. Expect to pay around £2000 - £2500 for a 40 to 60 tube reconditioned sunbed or sunshower with new tubes, and acrylics in good condition.

If you have spent so much money on getting your salon ready that you have none left for the sunbeds, (not as unusual as you might think), then renting or Lease-Purchase may be a viable option for you. A typical rental figure may be around £40 per week for a reconditioned sunbed or sunshower, but you may be liable for the cost of maintenance, and will almost certainly have to pay for the cost of retubes, (equivalent to a mileage charge when renting a car). In a reasonably busy salon, a commercial sunbed could easily take more than £40 per day, so renting at £40 per week can quite easily still be profitable.

Lease-Purchase is similar to renting, but you would pay a higher weekly rental figure (maybe 50% more) but you would own the sunbed after around 24 months, or a lower weekly amount and own it after 36 months.

Another very popular option is profitshare, also called incomeshare. This is ideal for hair salons, hotels or gyms that already have a current profitable business, and want to use a spare room(s) to generate extra profit. The profitshare company owns, installs, maintains, and retubes the sunbed. After an initial installation fee that they may charge you, usually around £250, you then simply pay back 50% of the sunbeds' takings back to the owner each month. In essence, the sunbed owner is taking all the financial risk, while you test the water with no risk. The beauty of this system is that if business turns out slower than you hoped at first, you only have to pay half of however much you took that month. So you never end up with a rental bill for the sunbed that is more than you have taken. Another advantage of this system is that the sunbeds will generally be maintained regularly, and to a high standard. Even if just one tube is not lit, you simply call them and they come out to repair it, at no cost to you. This gives you a big advantage over other local tanning salons that may not be so committed to maintenance and retubes if they have to pay for this each time.

Another advantage of profitshare is that provided you pay your monthly invoices on time, some suppliers will upgrade your sunbed(s) after 3 years or so, suffering the depreciation of the sunbeds rather than you.

The drawback of this system is that if the sunbed turns out to be really busy, then you still have to pay half of those substantial takings back to the owner. But since the whole idea of your business venture is to make a profit, then profitshare is generally in the favour of the sunbed supplier rather than the salon owner. If your shop turns out to be busy, you would be better off with a fixed rental fee, so that you can keep the rest of the takings yourself. If your salon is relatively quiet then you would gain by having the sunbeds on profitshare, but this means you only have the best option of the two choices if your salon is quiet, which is of course not the general idea of any business.

In addition some salon owners are reluctant to spend time, money and effort promoting the sunbeds, knowing that the sunbed owners stand to gain 50% of the fruits of these efforts. So for two reasons you as a salon owner will have less incentive to grow the business when profitsharing sunbeds rather than renting them for a set monthly fee. The only saving grace in the profitshare situation is that after your contract is over (usually 12 months) most suppliers will agree to sell you the sunbed outright, or even increase your rate from 50/50 to 60/40.

All sunbeds come supplied from the manufacturers with a non-resettable hour counter to allow the owner to tell when the sunbed is due for a retube (6-800 hours), and the owner of a profitshare sunbed will use this to tell him how many hours the sunbed has done each month, so that he can invoice you for his half.

Profitshare does not generally work for tanning salons that have no other income stream, because you only have half the total sunbed takings to pay for your running costs e.g. rent, rates, staff wages etc. It works well for existing businesses (e.g. gyms, hairdressers, hotels), who are already taking enough money to pay these bills, and who simply wish to make extra money without the initial financial commitment of buying a sunbed.

Controlling the sunbeds

If your sunbeds are rented, leased or on profitshare, the owner will provide a token meter with each sunbed, that is normally mounted on the wall in the sunbed room next to the sunbed.

The customer undresses, then inserts tokens that each give (say) 3 minutes, up to a maximum of around 4 tokens.

Some sunbed suppliers set the token meter (Pictured) to count down from about 2 minutes once the tokens are inserted to give the customer time to undress, with an override button labelled "Start" to switch the sunbed on as soon as the customer is ready. In this case the meters can be mounted at reception so that the salon operator can insert the tokens, with the override button wired remotely to the sunbed room.



Token box image shown for illustrative purposes only

The meters can also be set to use £1 coins, but this has the drawback that eventually break-ins occur to the premises overnight, or even to the coin meter itself during a dishonest customer's session whilst the sunbed is on.

If you own the sunbeds, you have the option to use a control system rather than separate token meters in each room. This is much more convenient than token meters and allows the receptionist to choose any tanning session duration for each sunbed from reception, with a remote box in the sunbed room controlling the sunbed. (LCS system pictured) The sunbed automatically comes on after a pre-set undressing time (e.g. 2 minutes). The receptionist is then free to deal with other customers after sending the command to the sunbed. The remote box in the sunbed room has a button to allow the customer to override the undressing time if they undress quickly. They are much more reliable than token meters provided they are professionally installed, and can provide the salon owner with useful statistics on sunbed use. They are useful for salon owners who employ staff whilst they are not present themselves on the premises, as any dishonesty can be pinpointed. Available from **Leisure Control Systems Ltd** at www.lci.gb.com

Music

Most tanning salons I've visited have music playing in the sunbed rooms, but what they don't have is a facility for the customer to adjust the volume, or turn it off. It would be rude of you to force a guest in your house or car to listen to your choice of music at high volume, so why do tanning salon owners do this to their valuable customers? It would be naïve, verging on arrogance, to assume that other people have the same musical taste as you or your staff, yet so many salons have speakers mounted in the sunbed room, set loud enough to be heard over the fans whilst the sunbed is running, with no way to turn them down or off when the sunbed has switched off.

Some people even put one speaker from the stereo pair in one sunbed room, and the other speaker in a different room, so the customer can only hear one channel, left or right! Believe me, it sounds terrible.

So if you provide music in the sunbed cubicles, which is of course is highly recommended, ensure that you provide a volume control too, or at least a way for the customer to switch it off if they find your choice of music distasteful. Better still, pay somebody to build a system that gives them a choice of channels. This can be done relatively inexpensively using 2 or 3 CD players and/or DAB radios tuned to different stations in reception, wired to a selector switch in each sunbed room via 12 core alarm cable.

Eye Protection

Most customers prefer to have re-usable goggles for free, whilst some will buy disposable **"Wink Eze"** type for around 50p (pictured). These, and all other consumables are available at **UV logistics** www.uv-logistics.co.uk on **0800 633 5978**. Whilst the disposable type will make you some profit long term, you will constantly have to remove used ones from your sunbed rooms prior to allowing the next customer in. When you collect the re-usable goggles from your customer as they leave your salon, be sure to disinfect them, otherwise subsequent customers can receive eye infections. The easiest way is to keep a bowl of dilute disinfectant solution behind reception, then after a while remove the goggles from the solution and leave them to dry on a folded towel.



Goggles image shown for illustrative purposes only

Tanning Accelerators

Mark-up on these products is 80% - 100%, so can seriously boost your profits. They range from £0.75 + vat for a budget sachet retailing at £1.50, to high-end bottles costing £24.99 and more.

Keep a range of brands and monitor stock each day. Good suppliers will give you a free display with a starter pack. Try **Cyrano Leisure** www.cyranoltd.com on **0808 1087778**. (Sample Pictured)

Phone line / telephone number

Try to encourage as many customers as possible to book their sunbed session by telephoning in. The higher the proportion of customers booked on at a given time compared to walk-ins, the more efficiently you can accommodate large customer throughput during busy times.

Try to get BT, or your phone line supplier to allocate you a number with multiple repeat digits that are easy to remember. A customer is more likely to phone in and book if they can remember your number rather than having to look it up. If BT cannot or will not do this, be cheeky and think of as many as possible valid numbers relevant to your area and ring them! If it rings out, instantly hang up. When you find one that is N/U (number unobtainable, i.e. a continuous tone, or a message saying that it is not allocated) then ring BT and tell them you want that number! They may not be too keen at first, but it works, I've done it many times.

Some examples are:

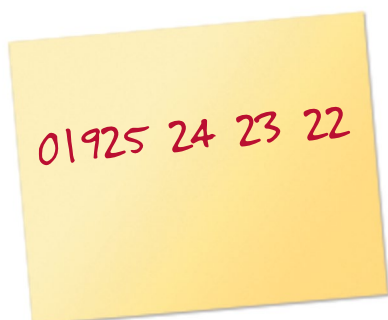
If you live in a major city, with the format 0151 424 xxxx, then the range of valid numbers is 0151 424 0000 to 0151 424 9999

If you live in a town with the format 01925 xxxxxx, then your number range is the six last digits, but it cannot begin with 0, 1 or 9, so start with an easy to remember number starting with 2-8, eg 01925 24 23 22.

Bear in mind that certain ranges within the main number range will be allocated to certain parts of the town, depending on where the exchanges are situated. For instance one area will be allocated 6-figure numbers starting with 2, giving a range of 200000 to 299999, and another area may be allocated the range 300000 to 499999. It sounds a lot of effort at first, but you will soon realise that only a relatively small range of numbers are valid for your area. Simply obtain a neighbouring businesses' number for a starting point, to give you an idea of which number range is valid for your premises. Obviously don't bother trying extremely easy ones like 0151 444 4444 as they will have long since been taken by taxi firms, estate agents and the like. Time consuming yes, but once it's yours, it's yours for good, and Ofcom forbid BT from charging you for it!

When you order your phone line, ask for Call Waiting and Caller Display. If you are already using the phone, perhaps for a non-business related call or speaking to somebody that just wants to chat, the Call Waiting feature allows you to accept incoming calls from customers by ending the existing call or by putting them on hold. Caller Display, as you know from your mobile, allows you to see the caller's number, so that you can see missed calls if you were cleaning a sunbed or dealing with a customer. (1471 only tells you one previous caller).

I'm surprised how many salons open up with no landline phone number and run the business from a mobile. Customers ringing in from a landline have to pay 37p per minute to ring a mobile. And what if it gets stolen, or loses network coverage temporarily? Not really a good way to give your customers a professional impression when they (try to) phone in.



Credit Card Payments

When I first considered taking credit card payments in my first tanning salon, I was put off by the bank's credit card machine rental fee of £35 per month, and the 3% commission on all credit card transactions. This was a big mistake. When I finally did install one in 1996, after a recommendation by another salon owner, I was amazed by how much more customers were prepared to spend. Budget tanning accelerator sachet sales quadrupled, the more expensive ones went through the roof. Before the machine was installed, I hardly ever sold the £10 - £15 bottles. Also boosted massively were sales of courses (e.g. pay £15 now and get £18 worth of sessions). Some customers even have two courses running concurrently, as I my customers have a choice depending on which sunbed or weekday. All purchased on debit or credit card! Another pleasant surprise was increased sales of gift vouchers at Christmas.

I soon noticed that when customers buy courses, they use the sunbeds more frequently than when they pay each time they turn up. (An analogy is contract mobile phones being used more than pay as you go)

Notwithstanding your responsibility to ensure that your customers do not overexpose due to using the sunbeds too frequently, I recommend that before you open you:

- **Order a credit card machine.** (Telephone Barclaycard sales on: 0800 616161)
- **Set up 'course' prices.** (E.g. 6 sessions for the price of 5, or 18 minutes for the price of 15)
- **Have gift vouchers printed.** (Valid only with your signature, in case of theft)



Credit card symbol image shown for illustrative purposes only

The Sunbed Association

The Sunbed Association (TSA) is a non-profit making organisation and was established in 1995 as the industry's trade association, with the primary aim of promoting consistent good practice in the use of sunbeds. Membership costs £115 + Vat per year and is highly recommended.

Membership will earn you recognition for your business as a reputable outlet, and your customers will feel confident that you care about their well-being by adhering to TSA code of practice.

They provide help and advice, recommended insurers, marketing material, Health & Safety posters, age restriction posters, window stickers to advertise your membership, a training DVD and manual for your staff, customer record cards etc. www.sunbedassociation.org.uk

You can also use the TSA to help educate yourself and your staff about the many health benefits of UV, including well-being and Vitamin D production.



Health and Safety/Local Council/Planning Officer

It's a matter of time before you receive a visit from your local council officer, so you might as well call them to come and see you before you start work on building your cubicles, to save you the trouble of having to carry out alterations after you have opened. A small example of things they may insist on that may not initially occur to you are:

Sunbed room doors need to open outwards, so that if a customer fainted in the sunbed room and lay against the door, you can still gain access to the room to help them.

Any rooms without natural light need an emergency light fitting installed, which contains a battery should the mains power fail.

Hand wash facilities and drinking water must be available for staff.

Needless to say, this is not an exhaustive list, but simply examples of modifications that are much more expensive and inconvenient to carry out after you have opened for business.



Customer record cards

It is very important to be able to evaluate the skin type of your customer prior to deciding the length of their tanning session. Burning them will not exactly convey a professional image. Besides, a customer walking out of your shop in view of the public with a golden tan is a rather better advertisement for you than somebody with a red face! When your customer attends your shop for the first time, and fills out a customer record card, it asks questions that help you to evaluate their skin type and so build up a healthy tan over time, with a programme tailored personally for them. Customer record Cards are available at **The Sunbed Association** visit www.sunbedassociation.org.uk

After you open...

Customers

Treat all of your customers like VIP's. Most salon owners would normally do this during the first few weeks of trade, but you and your staff need to keep it up long term, and not get complacent. Try to give them the impression that they are in a hotel. For instance, provide each one with a clean towel to wipe themselves down after using the sunbed. Whilst this is more expensive for you than paper towel dispensers in the sunbed rooms, it creates an atmosphere of luxury and professionalism.



Show each new customer to the sunbed room, and show them how to use the sunbed. This is not only courtesy, it is your responsibility to show them how to turn the equipment off in an emergency (*the red emergency stop button*)

Provide a mirror, chair, coat hanger and shelf in the sunbed room. Have free moisturiser, cotton wool balls and paper towels for them to use.

Cleanliness

Of course this is obvious, but so many salon owners let it slip after a while. Since 1984 I've been running a separate business carrying out repairs, maintenance and servicing to commercial sunbeds. You really don't want to know some of the things I've found underneath a sunbed. Whilst I admit that customers don't normally get to see under there, it highlights to me that the rest of the salon is unlikely to be clean if nobody has cleaned under the sunbeds for 6 months.

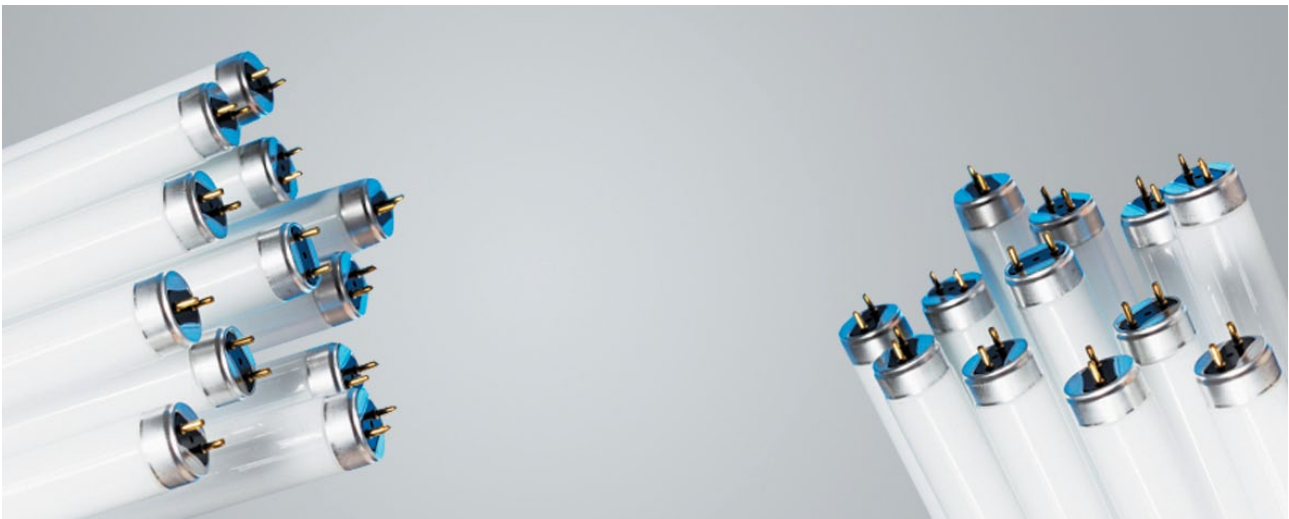


Your customers expect, and deserve, absolute cleanliness, and if you become complacent, rest assured that some will go elsewhere. And you can bet that they will tell the owner of the next salon why they left yours...

Maintenance

This is another one that owners start off well with all good intentions, then neglect. Without a shred of doubt, a badly maintained sunbed will be less reliable. Each and every breakdown will cost you more in repair and lost custom than the service that could have prevented it. And each service will probably prevent many breakdowns, not just one.

The biggest enemy of a sunbed is dust. The fans draw in massive amounts of cooling air whenever the sunbed is on. If it contains filters, remove and wash them regularly, or have somebody do it for you. Dust eventually causes overheating, which causes internal electrical components to fail. As mentioned in the ventilation section, the overheating also causes the output of the UV lamp to drop, even if the lamp is new or nearly new. Also, the dust settles on the glass of the lamp, and the inside of the acrylics, massively reducing the amount of UV transmitted to the customer. And remember you initially went to all that cost and effort to get the best sunbed tubes in the first place! For me, failing to maintain the sunbed properly is bad for your business on many levels.



Lamp Maintenance

Sunbed lamps manufacturers tend to quote either 500 or 800 useful running hours. They don't simply stop working when they have reached the end of their useful life, but typically the UV output has reduced by at least 25%, and your customers will start to notice if they are left in the sunbed for much longer. In typical British style, most of your customers won't complain that they have not tanned, they will simply try another salon. It is the epitome of false economy to delay replacing your sunbed lamps after this time, especially when you consider that at £1 per 3 mins, that sunbed has taken you around £10,000. All commercial sunbeds have a non-resettable hour counter, make sure you use it to monitor when the lamps need changing, and write the number down so that you know when the next re-lamp is due.

I frequently receive calls from customers asking me to re-lamp their sunbeds who have no idea how many hours they have done since the last retube. Because they are not sure, they only need one or two customers to complain that the sunbeds don't feel as strong as they used to, and to be on the safe side they have the sunbeds re-tubed. An analogy is replacing the tyres on your car for new ones when they still have 5mm of tread left. Basically, be meticulous in recording the hour counter reading on the sunbed whenever you replace the lamps.

Important information...

House Rules The following are non-negotiable, make sure any staff that you employ adhere to them.

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- 1.** Do not let anybody use the sunbed without eye protection. Many customers say they do not like to use goggles, but you and your staff must insist that they take them from you anyway. Closing your eyelids does NOT offer sufficient protection from UV rays, which can cause cataracts and also permanent eye damage.
- 2.** Do not let anybody under 16 use the sunbed, regardless of whether they have a note from their parents, or how old they look. Although this is not illegal (at the time of writing), you would find it very difficult to justify your actions if you found yourself in a court of law after burning a child. And make no mistake, under 16 is a child!

From 2009 the Sunbed Association recommend that nobody under the age of 18 should use a sunbed.

Young people's skin is far more sensitive to UV than when older. In addition, it is a well-established fact that the risk of skin cancer later in life from sunburning when a child is much greater than that due to becoming sunburnt when an adult. The DNA in skin cells is damaged by the UV light much more easily in children.

Never let more than one customer in the sunbed room at one time. Its surprising how many couples request this, and even mums asking to take their children in with them, but by doing so you are effectively condoning the other person being in the sunbed room without eye protection whilst the sunbed is on.

- 3.** Never let anyone use the sunbed on consecutive days. Yes, some people really are stupid enough to try this, and it is a matter of time before you have regular customers who want to do it. Explain that you care about their well-being and therefore cannot allow it. They will probably appreciate that, and consider you as a respectable salon owner. But, Ok, so you can't stop them going to a competitor's salon who may allow them to do it, but do you really want customers anyway that look burnt rather than tanned?

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Electrical Advice...

Sunbed/Vertical Tanning Unit Electrical Specification

Fuseboard:

Lie down sunbed: Single phase: 45 or 50 Amp MCB
 Three phase: 3 x 20 Amp MCB

Vertical Tanning Unit: Single phase: 63 Amp MCB
 Three phase: 3 x 32 Amp MCB

Residual Current Device (RCD/RCB/RCBO) is optional, but if fitted must be 100mA trip, not 30mA.

Cable Single phase: 10mm Twin and Earth (Lie down and vertical sunbeds)
Cable 3 Phase: 3 x 4mm (Lie down sunbeds)
 3 x 6mm (Vertical sunbeds)

Termination in room:

All Sunbeds: 63 Amp Rotary isolator
Cooker switches are not sufficient

Lie Down Sunbeds:

Please mount on wall behind sunbed on right hand side in an accessible position, approx 1.5m high.
Alternatively mount on the adjacent wall at right hand end of sunbed above skirting.
(Flex emerges from right hand end of sunbed at floor level.)



Vertical Sunbeds:

Please mount on wall behind sunbed to left or right hand side in an accessible position.
(Flex emerges from top of sunbed).



Lie down & vertical sunbed images shown for illustrative purposes only

Electrical Advice...

Technical Notes for Your Electrician

RCD's trip with an earth leakage of 30mA which is sufficiently low enough to protect against electric shock, and is the industry standard size of RCD. But what is unusual about sunbeds is that the choke (ballast) inside that supplies each lamp, by its very nature, has a natural earth leakage of around 0.75mA.. This is inherent in its design, as a copper coil surrounding a soft iron core. Hence a 40 tube sunbed can easily have a total earth leakage of 30mA, and a 50 tube sunbed almost certainly would. If you were not aware of this, you could be scratching your head for days chasing an earth fault that is non-existent. The much rarer 100mA trip RCD must be used on sunbeds. To make it worse, the earth leakage of the ballasts increase with time, so do not fit a 30mA RCD even if nuisance tripping does not initially occur.

It is possible to run 2 sunbeds on a single phase supply, provided the main Utility fuse is 100A and additional shop load does not include high current devices such as showers, electric hand wash, tumble driers etc. Sunbeds salons have very good load diversity, as average time that the beds are on load is low compared to total time, due to the period required for clients to dress and undress.

It is possible for salon owners to run 3 sunbeds on a single phase supply whilst waiting for a 3 phase supply that is on order, provided they are acutely aware that they cannot energise all 3 machines simultaneously. The reason this temporary situation may be required is that the Utilities require around 2-3 months to upgrade from single phase, but the salon owner frequently has 2 lie-down sunbeds and one vertical. Each customer tends to specifically require one or the other, whilst often pairs of female customers visit the shop, both wanting to use a lie down sunbed each at the same time. So this system allows the salon owner to service most customer requirements eventhough all 3 machines are never in use together. Due to the diversity mentioned above, it does not significantly reduce the throughput attainable when the 3 phase is fitted.

In this case sunbed rooms would be supplied with single phase (10mm) cable from either a new 3 phase board with just the single incoming phase energised, or the existing single phase board which is replaced with a 3 phase board on the day of the upgrade. In either case the single phase cable to the sunbeds rooms are permanent.



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I hope you found this guide useful, for more information on how to open a successfull tanning salon:

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