

Environmentally friendly light bulbs 'can give you skin cancer'

By JENNY HOPE

Energy-saving light bulbs can be bad for your skin, doctors are warning. The fluorescent devices produce a more intense light and can aggravate a range of existing problems, especially in those with light-sensitive conditions.

Eco-bulbs are due to become compulsory in British homes within four years. But campaigners want the Government to allow an opt-out so people with health problems can still use old-style incandescent bulbs.

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[Energy-saving bulbs 'can cause migraines' warn experts](#)

There have been growing concerns that low-energy light can trigger migraines, as well as dizziness, loss of focus and discomfort among those with epilepsy.

There have also been complaints from sufferers of lupus - an auto-immune disease causing many symptoms including pain.

The latest warning was issued by Spectrum - an alliance of charities working with people with lightsensitive conditions - and the British Association of Dermatologists (BAD).

Critics complain low-energy lights are either "cold" or "green," take up to a minute to warm up properly and because they are fluorescent, flicker.

Dr Colin Holden, president of the BAD, said: "It is important that patients with photosensitive skin eruptions are allowed to use lights that don't exacerbate their condition. Photosensitive eruptions range from disabling eczema-like reactions, to light sensitivities that can lead to skin cancer.

"It is essential that such patients are able to protect themselves from specific wavelengths of light emitted by fluorescent bulbs, especially as they are often trapped indoors because they can't venture out in natural sunlight. Andrew Langford, of the Skin Care Campaign, said:

"Incandescent light bulbs are the only source of electric light for many thousands of people with light-sensitive conditions.

"Add to this the thousands whose conditions or treatments may secondarily cause them to be light-sensitive, and you have a large number potentially being isolated in the dark.

"The Government simply must allow incandescent light bulbs to be available to these people, their families, friends and employers, and at a fair price."

Spectrum, which is running a campaign to raise awareness of the impact on health of switching to lowenergybulbs, says as many as 340,000 people could be affected.

Last week, the Migraine Action Association was inundated with calls from sufferers who linked attacks to exposure to the newstyle lighting.

Spectrum is urging the government to allow incandescent light bulbs to be supplied to people with health problems, which would enable protection of the environment without penalising those unable to live with fluorescent lighting.

One option could be to allow the purchase of environmentally friendly energy efficient incandescent bulbs which GE Consumerand Industrial is currently developing and hopes to market in 2010.

The Lighting Association says modern low-energy bulbs give a constant flicker-free light, although a small number of health problems have been reported by people using cheap poor-quality varieties.

The Energy Saving Trust, the Government's body to promote energy efficiency, says we should buy only bulbs with the Energy Saving Recommended - ESR - logo.



Not so friendly: Energy-saving light bulbs create an environment damaging for many people with light sensitivities

