

What Melanotan II is

A synthetic ring of seven amino acids that mimics the body's tanning hormone, built in Arizona in the late 1980s. More potent and less selective than the original: it hits the receptors for pigment, appetite, sexual arousal, and blood pressure at once.

FORMS

10 mg vials; nasal sprays of unverified strength

STATUS

Approved nowhere, for anything. Unlawful to sell for human use in the US, UK, and Australia

ITS APPROVED COUSINS

Scenesse, an implant for a rare light-sensitivity disease; Vyleesi, for low sexual desire. Neither tans

AUG 2026

Australia's regulator told consumers to stop after finding sprays dosed from 22 to 54 mg per labeled 30 mg

DIFFERENT FROM THE REST OF THIS SERIES

It visibly does what it says. The reasons no company finished developing it are the side effects. The gamble is not whether it works; it is the harms.

This pamphlet is for adults using or being offered Melanotan II for tanning, and for the people around them. It is a summary of the published record, not medical advice.

Before using Melanotan II, ask

- ☐ Has a dermatologist seen my skin, and do I know my moles now?
- ☐ Any personal or family history of melanoma or atypical moles?
- ☐ High blood pressure, heart disease, pregnancy, or under 18?
- ☐ Vial or spray? If a spray, how could I know the dose?
- ☐ Am I planning to use sunbeds to bring out the tan?
- ☐ Would a self-tanner do the job?

SOURCES

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8. Forbes, August 7, 2026, and Axios, June 29, 2026, on the melanotan tanning trend and its risks.
9. Representative Melanotan II vial and nasal-spray listings and dosing instructions from research-chemical vendors, September 2026.
10. U.S. Food and Drug Administration. Warning letter to Melanocorp, Inc., August 2007; approvals of Scenesse (afamelanotide) and Vyleesi (bremelanotide), 2019.
11. Therapeutic Goods Administration (Australia). Melanotan II tanning products found inconsistently dosed; safety alert advising consumers to stop use. August 2026.

This guide is an educational summary of published sources and is not medical advice. Melanotan II is not approved by any regulator for any use; selling it for human use is unlawful in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia; and the products sold as research chemicals or nasal sprays have been found to contain doses that do not match their labels. Doses described are reported as sellers instruct, not recommended. Status statements are current as of the edition date.

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READER'S GUIDE

Melanotan II

A guide to the tanning peptide: it works, no regulator has ever approved it, and the published cases are about moles, kidneys, and emergency rooms

Melanotan II is the peptide that tans. It was built at the University of Arizona in the late 1980s as a way to darken skin without sun damage, and in the handful of people who ever took it in a study it did exactly that. It was also never approved, anywhere, for anything: the same laboratory's work went on to become two prescription drugs for other conditions, and Melanotan II itself was left to the internet, where it is now sold by the vial and the nasal spray as the Barbie peptide. This guide covers what it is, what the small studies showed, the harms that have reached medical journals, how it is dosed as sold, and why an unapproved tanning injection is a different kind of risk from most of the peptides in this series.

What the studies showed, and the harms on record

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Human studies, 1996 and 2004, small and from the inventors: it tans; nausea, flushing, and erections limited the dose

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Trials longer than a few weeks, and no approval, application, or registered trial anywhere

CASE REPORTS IN USERS

EVENT	NOTE
New and changing moles	Many reports; the drug's job is to stimulate pigment cells
Melanoma	Reported; cause unproven; screening defeated either way
Rhabdomyolysis	6 mg in one injection; intensive care
Renal infarction, brain-swelling syndrome	Blood-pressure effects of the drug
Priapism	Emergency treatment; the mechanism behind Vyleesi
Pigment in the mouth	Gums and cheeks; partly reversed at 3 months

THE SCREENING PROBLEM

Melanoma is caught by noticing a mole that changed. Melanotan II changes every mole at once, and sunbed users add UV on top.

How it is used, and where the regulators stand

SELLER PROTOCOL FOR A 10 MG VIAL + 2 ML WATER (5,000 MCG/ML). NO TRIAL.

PHASE	DOSE	UNITS USED	
Loading, 7–14 days	250–500 mcg daily	5–10	3.5–7 mg
Maintenance	250 mcg twice weekly	5	2 mg per 4 wk
The 2012 ICU case	6 mg at once	120	Over a vial

The tan needs UV to develop. Nasal sprays: no arithmetic possible; labeled doses were off by nearly twofold when tested.

MELANOTAN II	Unapproved everywhere; no compounding nomination; no pharmacy pathway; FDA warning letter to a US seller in 2007
SCENESSE, VYLEESI	Approved 2019 for a rare disease and for sexual desire; neither is a tanning drug
AUG 2026	TGA safety alert: stop using Melanotan II products

THERE IS NO LAWFUL VERSION

Every other title in this series has a prescription route, a pending listing, or an approved cousin that does the same job. This one has none.

Dose arithmetic, and safety

UNITS = (MCG ÷ MCG/ML) × 100

A 10 mg vial with 2 mL is 5,000 mcg/mL: 250 mcg is 5 units, 500 mcg is 10. Sellers advise bedtime dosing to sleep through the nausea; the nausea is the drug acting outside the skin.

10 MG VIAL, ILLUSTRATION ONLY

WATER	250 MCG	500 MCG
1 mL	2.5 units	5 units
2 mL	5 units	10 units
4 mL	10 units	20 units

- Near-universal: nausea, flushing, lost appetite, fatigue, spontaneous erections.
- Skin: new, darker, larger moles; pigment in nails and mouth; persists for months.
- Cardiovascular: raised pressure and pulse; renal infarction and a brain-swelling syndrome in reports.
- Do not use with many or atypical moles, a melanoma history, high blood pressure, heart disease, pregnancy, or under 18.
- Product: mislabeled sprays, unverified vials, no sterility certification.

WHAT DOES HAVE EVIDENCE

Self-tanners for the color, sunscreen and shade for protection, Scenesse from a physician for the rare disease. No approved way exists to make skin produce melanin for cosmetic reasons.