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Some Positives About The Sun

The poor sun seems to get a lot of bad press. Yet, we love it, something calls us outside to enjoy it, and although we're not completely safe in the sun these days, I think a little recap of the benefits of the sun might be in order.

There are some huge benefits to getting outside every single day (even when it's not sunny, but that might be a different article), and a huge percentage of us in the northern hemisphere are deficient in vitamin D.



So you probably already know that our bodies make vitamin D when exposed to the sun, and from that, we also make serotonin (which is the "happy hormone" also responsible for waking us up). If we lack serotonin, we tend to crave sugar and feel a bit 'bleurgh' - just like we do in the winter, when there's less sun and so less vitamin D and less serotonin.

Vitamin D is important for SO much of our bodies. A lack is indicated in (ie it doesn't specifically cause, but is a part of the picture of) nearly every disease.

If you suffer sugar cravings, a low mood or a poor immune system, it's worth having a think about whether you might be lacking vitamin D. Likewise, if you drink a lot of tea or coffee - and you really need it to wake up and get going - vitamin D is definitely worth considering since caffeine kills serotonin.

So, what is vitamin D responsible for? Well, it plays a key part in bone and muscle health by aid in mineral absorption (and if you're over 60, vitamin D levels correlate with strength). A lack of Vitamin D also links to high blood pressure, type 1 diabetes (increasing vitamin D from 25 nmol/l to 75 nmol/l improves insulin sensitivity by 60%!), rheumatoid arthritis, MS, psoriasis and inflammatory bowel disease. Vitamin

D also has anticancer properties.

The right sort of exposure to the sun depends on your skin type and how easily you burn, as well as the strength of the sun. How much time you need in the sun before you put cream on, cover up, or go inside varies between one minute and one hour depending on these things. I have a chart I'm happy to email you, please ask. I have also been using an app which uses the current uv index to tell you how long you've got before you burn if you have no sunscreen, spf 15, spf 30 or spf 45. I think this works from the weather forecast though, so obviously depends on the forecast being correct! It's called the 'Wolfram' sun exposure reference app.

Remember sunscreen reduces synthetic vitamin D absorption, so if you're supplementing vitamin D and smothering yourself in suncream, you might not be absorbing as much of your supplement as you'd like. This said, it could be that you're getting enough from the sun to make up the difference, so maybe this doesn't matter.

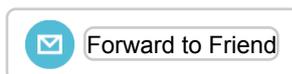
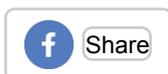
The other thing to bear in mind is that vitamin D is fat soluble, so the more body fat you're carrying, the more vitamin D you'll need. This isn't necessarily going to mean more time in the sun though; if you're not as healthy as you could be, you'll be better to supplement with vitamin D rather than increase your sun exposure.

Vitamin D is stored in our liver and can last for up to 3 months. If you feel fed up around December / January time it could well be because your supplies of vitamin D are running low. Regardless, it's usually a good idea to take a good quality D3 supplement between about October and March to keep your levels up.

Until next time, enjoy staying healthy!

Best wishes,

Heather



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