

Let the Sunshine In

“Light is as effective as antidepressant medications are, perhaps more so.”

—Anna Wirz-Justice, Ph.D., Professor of Psychiatry

The proper amount of sunlight can have healing and cleansing effects on the body. While too much sun can cause adverse effects on health, too little can have negative health effects also.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE BENEFITS OF SUNLIGHT?

Perhaps one of its greatest benefits may be the strengthening of the immune system. Fungal infections of the skin are cured or go into remission after sunlight therapy. White blood cells and antibody levels increase, and neutrophils are stimulated to engulf bacteria more rapidly with exposure to ultraviolet light or sunlight in amounts that do not redden skin.

Studies have shown that repeated short exposures to the sun lower cholesterol, triglycerides, blood pressure, and blood sugar. Sunlight speeds the elimination of toxic chemicals, including metals and pesticides. It also has a dramatic effect on trace minerals, making them more accessible to the body. Jaundice is reduced in both children and adults by exposure to sunlight. Many skin diseases, including acne and psoriasis, improve with exposure to sun.

Dr. Esther John of the North Carolina Cancer Center has found that a moderate exposure to sunlight very well may lower the risk of breast cancer by 30 to 40%. It has been found that because of light's influence on various physiological and psychological functions, moderate sunlight may profoundly influence mood and fertility in women. PMS has been proven extensively to be quite responsive to light treatment. It appears that light affects serotonin levels in the brain, which will elevate or improve mood. Women receiving adequate levels of sunlight report less depression, fewer mood swings, better sleep, more energy, increased concentration and greater mental alertness. Sunlight has been found to be beneficial in the treatment of Chronic Fatigue Syndrome, insomnia and bulimia as well.

Sunlight has been found to be extremely beneficial in the treatment of depression. According to Dr. Norman Rosenthal of the National Institute of Mental Health. “Light, a versatile therapeutic tool, has been shown scientifically to have beneficial clinical effects in treating depression. Light therapy may be used alone or in concert with other modalities to treat depression, and properly administered, has no known side effects.” The December 1995 issue of the Journal of the American Medical Association stated, “... light therapy should be regarded as a first-line treatment, given its high success...”

If using light for therapeutic purposes light boxes with an intensity of 10,000 lux has been found to be the most effective. A general rule of thumb is: people who awaken early would benefit with evening use and those having problems falling asleep would benefit most with morning use.

Fifteen minutes of sunlight every day could prevent nearly 100% of osteoporosis cases in that it stimulates the skin to produce Vitamin D, which is absolutely necessary for calcium absorption and utilization. It is obvious that we need sunlight for good health.

DOESN'T EXPOSURE TO THE SUN CAUSE CANCER?

The prevailing thought is that sunlight causes cancer, yet scientists and doctors have repeatedly proven that there is no link between sunlight and cancer. In fact studies have shown that the incidence of cancer is six to ten times lower in countries that are closer to the equator. A naturopath by the name of Harland Call was diagnosed with skin cancer. The medical doctors recommended surgery as well as other traditional therapies. Dr. Call decided to forgo these therapies in favor of his own protocol which included a

healthy diet and sunbathing the affected area. Within a relatively short period of time one of the medical doctors declared the cancer "healed."

The benefits of sunlight as a cancer protective are pretty well established for ovarian, colon, rectal, prostate, and breast cancer. It is our processed, refined, adulterated and hydrogenated foods with sunlight exposure that cause cancer. The chemical interactions that occur between the adulterated food and the sunlight are the actual cause of cancer.

IS THERE A SAFE WAY TO BE IN THE SUN?

Sunbathe with caution. Generally speaking, dark skinned people can tolerate more sun than light-skinned people. Red-headed and blond people should begin with very brief exposures to the sun. Sunbathing for two minutes on each area - front, back and sides - is the safest way to begin. Gradually increase the time by one minute, each day. Never sunburn. Should you become pink, do not increase the time for several days. If after several days you are still pink, decrease the time. Aloe or calendula are effective for healing of reddened or even burned skin.

Beware of reflecting surfaces in the area where you sunbathe. Snow reflects 85% of the UV light, dry sand 17%, and glass and water around 3 - 5%. Sunbathing around snow or sand can cause you to burn more rapidly. Also, wet skin sunburns more easily than dry skin.

Clean skin is best for sunbathing. Fat or oil, such as those in suntan creams, oils, or lotions when applied to the skin can stimulate the formation of cancer cells. Sunscreen agents filter out many of the therapeutic and healing effects of sunlight. Para-aminobenzoic acid (PABA) which is in many of these products, can cause genetic damage when exposed to sunlight. Many people are allergic to PABA. I caution my patients against the use of sunscreens. Even "natural" sunscreens may contain chemicals. Just read the label.

As in most things moderation in sunbathing is the fundamental key. In our house we make sure that we do not consume hydrogenated oils. If we did, I certainly would not eat them just before going out in the sun for extended periods. Prior to being out in the sun we take several flax and DHA/EPA (fish oil) capsules along with several calcium lactate in the morning and throughout the day for skin protection.