

# Vitamin D: The Sunshine Vitamin

## Vitamin D: One Big Reason We Need Sun Exposure

The ‘Sunshine Vitamin’ is linked to lowering your risk of several forms of cancer and many other diseases.

Exposure to UVB present in sunshine and in most tanning beds is the body’s natural way to produce vitamin D, accounting for 90 percent of vitamin D production.<sup>1</sup> Dietary “supplements” are just that: Supplemental ways to produce vitamin D.

What’s more, research has shown that people who utilize indoor tanning equipment that emits UVB – which most tanning equipment does – also produce vitamin D. And studies have also shown that indoor tanning patrons have higher vitamin D blood levels than non-tanners.<sup>2</sup>

While the North American indoor tanning industry promotes itself as a cosmetic service, one undeniable side-effect of that cosmetic service is vitamin D production. Even though it may not be necessary to develop a tan to produce vitamin D, this should also be considered: There is growing consensus that humans may not be able to get enough vitamin D through dietary supplements alone (especially if recommended vitamin D levels are raised, as is widely anticipated, from 200-600 IU daily to 1,000-2,000 IU) and growing acceptance of moderate sun exposure as the best, cheapest, most widely available and most natural source. (In comparison, an 8-ounce glass of whole milk is fortified with just 100 IU of Vitamin D). Further, because research suggests that the risks associated with sun exposure are most likely related to intermittent sunburns, it is credible to believe that the benefits of regular, moderate non-burning exposure outweigh the easily manageable risks associated with overexposure.

New research has shown that vitamin D deficiency is epidemic in American adults today, suggesting that up to 90 percent of North Americans are vitamin D deficient and that vitamin D deficiency has significant implications on human health.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, two world-wide conferences on Vitamin D were convened in 2006 in North America, with universal consensus that Vitamin D deficiency is a real problem. As a result of those conferences, the American Cancer Society and the Canadian Cancer Society – which had both preached sun abstinence for years – both recognized for the first time in May 2006 that some sunlight is necessary for human health.

It is likely that over-usage of sunscreen in climates and seasons when sunburn is not a possibility — sunscreen almost completely prevents vitamin D production — has contributed to this problem. This is especially significant because:

- A 2006 systematic review of 63 studies on vitamin D status in relation to cancer risk has shown that vitamin D sufficiency may reduce one’s risk of colon, breast and ovarian cancers by up to 50 percent.<sup>4</sup>
- Additionally, vitamin D deficiency is a leading cause of osteoporosis, a disease affecting 25 million Americans which leads to 1 million hip and bone fractures every year.<sup>3</sup> In elderly individuals, such fractures are often deadly. Encouraging everyone to wear sunscreen all year long in any climate undoubtedly is contributing to this problem, as vitamin D is necessary for the body to properly process calcium.

- Vitamin D deficiency most likely plays a role in the development of muscular sclerosis, according to the Calgary based charity Direct-MS. (You can learn more about this by visiting [www.direct-ms.org](http://www.direct-ms.org)).
- Vitamin D deficiency is also believed to be linked to an increased risk of prostate cancer and even heart disease.

Four additional resources for more information and research on vitamin D are:

- [www.uvadvantage.com](http://www.uvadvantage.com)
- [www.vitaminDcouncil.com](http://www.vitaminDcouncil.com)
- [www.sunarc.org](http://www.sunarc.org)
- [www.qualitycounts.com/fpvitamind.html](http://www.qualitycounts.com/fpvitamind.html)

Additionally, a new Canadian Group, the Vitamin D Society, has been launched in 2006 to educate Canadians about Vitamin D deficiency and fund new Vitamin D research. Its web site is [www.vitaminDsociety.org](http://www.vitaminDsociety.org).

“Current research indicates vitamin D deficiency plays a role in causing 17 varieties of cancer, heart disease, stroke, hypertension, autoimmune diseases, diabetes, depression, chronic pain, osteoarthritis, osteoporosis, muscle weakness, muscle wasting, birth defects and periodontal disease,” the Vitamin D Council writes on its web site. “This does not mean that vitamin D is the only cause of these diseases, or that you will not get them if you take vitamin D. What it does mean is that vitamin D, and the many ways in which it affects a person’s health, can no longer be overlooked by the healthcare industry nor by individuals striving to maintain, or achieve, a greater state of health.”

While public health officials have floundered at how to craft a message that recognizes the both the benefits of sunlight and the risks of overexposure, the professional indoor tanning industry has for more than a decade promoted a balanced message about sunlight. The tanning industry’s core belief: Moderate tanning, for individuals who can develop a tan, is the smartest way to maximize the potential benefits of sun exposure while minimizing the potential risks associated with either too much or too little sunlight.

Sunburn prevention — not sun avoidance — is the key.

Source: [www.tanningtruth.com](http://www.tanningtruth.com)