

The Health Benefits of Sun Exposure

Brussels 06.06.2018 - As the temperatures are rising and summer is approaching in Europe, dermatologists and other doctors warn about the dangerous effects of UV radiation. While excessive exposure can indeed be detrimental, these recommendations often include total sun avoidance or exaggerated protective measures and completely ignore the numerous health benefits of sunlight.

Vitamin D plays an essential role in human health (1), especially in bone health by preventing osteoporosis, in the prevention of a number of cancers such as prostate, pancreatic and breast cancer and autoimmune diseases like multiple sclerosis and diabetes (2). Depending on the latitude, the month of the year, the time and the skin type, among others, 10-15 minutes in the sun per day without burning your skin are enough to reach sufficient Vitamin D levels. As only few foods (e.g. salmon, egg yolk) contain a small amount of Vitamin D, the best possibility to get this valuable nutrient in the winter months is to take supplements or to use sunbeds. A recent study proved that responsible and safe use indoor tanning is able to raise Vitamin D levels in healthy volunteers (3).

Additionally, exposure to sunlight has many other positive effects, e.g. the production of beta-endorphin, which is responsible for an improved mood and well-being. Another main health benefit is the release of nitric oxide in the skin, causing dilation of blood vessels and thereby reducing blood pressure (4).

The most common skin cancer, non-melanoma skin cancer, can be caused by chronic excessive exposure to sunlight. But these are lesions, not lethal and are easy to treat and often cured when detected early. Melanoma, the most deadly skin cancer, on the other hand occurs predominantly on the least sun-exposed areas of the body and there is evidence that regular and habitual sun exposure prevents the development of this malignant cancer rather than causing it (5).

«In general, more awareness is needed, especially in exploring the right risk-benefit-ratio in order to ensure optimal health», commented Frank Harbusch, Secretary General of the European Sunlight Association.

As everything in life: **Moderation is the key!** Protective measures in order to prevent sunburns are needed when a longer stay in the sun is planned. Embrace the sun responsibly.

The European Sunlight Association (ESA) is promoting safe, controlled and informed use of sunbeds in compliance with EU legislation. To ensure consumer safety, ESA is working hand in hand with the EU and Member State national authorities towards the implementation and enforcement of mandatory standards across Europe.

(1) **Holick (2016)**, Biological Effects of Sunlight, Ultraviolet Radiation, Visible Light, Infrared Radiation and Vitamin D for Health

(2) **Wei et al. (2018)**, Vitamin D Switches BAF Complexes to protect β -Cells

(3) **Kimball et al. (2017)**, Sunbeds with UVB radiation can produce physiological levels of serum 25-Hydroxyvitamin D in healthy volunteers

(4) **Weller (2016)**, Sunlight Has Cardiovascular Benefits Independently of Vitamin D.

(5) **Merril et al. (2015)** Exponentially increasing incidences of cutaneous malignant melanoma in Europe correlate with low personal annual UV doses and suggests 2 major risk factors