

~ Ask Granny Earth ~

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The Sun- Article #2

Ask Granny Earth

This week's article is a continuation from last week's answer to the following question: What's your take on the so-called danger of Ultraviolet rays of the sun? I remember my mother telling me that we need the sun for vitamin D. Do you think that sun screens are safe? How about tanning.

To re-cap on last week's answer: The FDA and the CDC tell us that the rising number of skin cancer cases is due to increasing exposure to the sun, tanning beds and sun lamps, and that Ultraviolet rays may be linked to immune system damage. That being said, it is a long held belief among natural healers and common sense, free thinkers that the sun, in moderation, provides us with Vit. D, which stimulates the immune system, speeds up circulation, stimulates the heart and brain, and aids the lymph system in clearing out toxins from the body. As for sun-screens; more and more scientific research by respectable dermatologists shows that the chemicals contained in sunscreens have a carcinogenic effect when exposed to sunlight, and do nothing to prevent skin cancer.

Dr. Joseph Mercola, states in his article, '**UV Light Linked to Skin Cancer, or Is It?**', that "Avoiding sunlight is probably one of the most damaging things you could do to your health. Most of us would benefit from being outdoors for one hour per day." Citing research results presented by the

American Academy of Dermatology, which was presented in an effort to confirm the damaging effects of sunlight (and its connection to melanoma), and to encourage the use sun screens (because 1 in 70 Caucasian Americans will develop a melanoma during their lifetime), Dr. Mercola states: "The research used human 'foreskins' to document that UV light causes melanoma. Well folks, how many men do you know that walk around with their foreskins exposed to the sun? I don't believe that foreskin was designed to have high sun exposure, yet this research is used as "proof" that you should avoid sunlight, as it will kill you." (www.drmercola.com).

A recent study showing an inverse correlation between cancer mortality and levels of ultraviolet B light (i.e., the more sunlight, the less cancer deaths-the less sunlight the more cancer deaths) by Dr. William Grant was published in the March 2002 issue of the prestigious Cancer Journal. His study showed that there are 13 malignancies that have a direct link to inadequate exposure to sunlight. These include, but are not limited to: breast, ovarian, uterus, digestive tract, stomach, colon, rectum, bladder, and esophagus.

But, is there a link between the sun and skin cancer, and if so why? Well, as stated above, the sun is our natural supplier of Vitamin D; 75% of our Vitamin D is generated by the skin's exposure to UVB rays. Without adequate amounts of Vitamin D our immune system malfunctions, and the risk for development of the cancers cited above increases, as does the risk for developing melanoma. Vitamin D aids in the absorption of calcium, helping to form and maintain strong bones. (I for one am curious about the possible connection between the increase in the number of osteoporosis cases since the "ozone scare" has been put upon us - just a thought).

Lack of Vitamin D from the sun has been associated with the following conditions: diabetes, heart disease, cancer, arthritis, PMS, fatigue, depression, SAD (Seasonal Affective Disorder), autoimmune disorders, and obesity, with cancer and depression being the central issues. It is interesting to note that Vitamin D is currently being evaluated for its use in the treatment of cancer (Current Drug Targets, Feb. 3, 2002, p. 85 – 94). The most recent piece of research pertaining to Vitamin D deficiencies that I have seen appeared in the USA WEEKEND magazine on March 10 of this year (p. 20): " The journal, New Scientist reported on Feb. 8th - "There is growing evidence that mothers-to-be who are not exposed to enough sunlight can develop a Vitamin D deficiency that may alter the baby's brain in the womb, laying the ground-work for schizophrenia in the child."

But, what is the link between cancer and the sun? Dr. Mercola cites credible research data to show that "increased risk of melanoma is most likely due to exposure to the *chlorine in drinking water, and to the skin's exposure to chlorine that we have through bathing and swimming in chlorinated pools.*" He states that, "*it is not the ozone.* But, it could be the Titanium Dioxide in your sunscreen. The National Institute for

Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) labels this chemical *a potential occupational carcinogen.*"

Bottom Line: Sunlight in moderation (about 1 hour a day) is good for us. Over-exposure and burning is not good. As for the tanning bed dilemma: the danger with tanning beds seems to be in the amount of time one is exposed to the Ultraviolet rays. There is a tendency among tanning bed users to over expose themselves in their desire to achieve what they consider to be an attractive tan. We have all seen people whose skin looks like leather, because they believe more is better. This is not the case with either the sun or tanning beds. If you must use a tanning bed, it would be wise to do it under professional supervision.