

# Sunshine, Vitamins and the 'Sunshine Vitamin'

*by Dr. Claudia Aguirre*

For a star that's been around for billions of years, the sun sure knows how to stay in the news. A recent headline claimed that sunshine can prevent cancer. This sort of news may seem paradoxical to our understanding of the sun as a carcinogen- but it is based on recent scientific findings that Vitamin D, made in the skin with the help of UV rays, may help prevent colon, breast, even skin cancer. So does this mean that you should ditch the sunscreen this summer? The answer is a resounding no! The truth is most people do not apply the recommended amount of sunscreen, and even fewer reapply thereafter. Combined with the fact that sunscreens do not prevent 100% of UV rays, it's safe to say that most people will inevitably get some rays directly on their skin. The key is balance- spending time in the great outdoors can be greatly beneficial and fun, but be smart about daylight defense. Use sun protection throughout the year to ensure your skin gets the proper protection while you worry about other things, like running, biking or playing outside.

## **The Low-Down on D**

The Vitamin D Dilemma is no new topic. Health experts have praised its benefits for decades, even calling it the "sunshine vitamin." But it is recent discoveries on the correlation between D deficiency and cancer risk that has made it a hot topic again. Thousands of people have been found to be deficient, but there are many reasons behind this. Skin color, geographic attributes, even exercise and age are all factors. The U.S. government is currently looking into updating the recommended daily amount before the end of summer.

So what to do this summer? Don't hibernate, get out there and enjoy it! There are sophisticated formulations that prevent UVA and UVB damage, while providing enhanced photoprotection with anti-oxidants and soothing and hydrating botanical extracts.

## **Daylight Defense**

Thinking about sun protection doesn't have to be confined to the odd beach trip. Anytime there is daylight, there are UV rays, even on cloudy days. UVA penetrates deep into the skin and is the major contributor to skin damage and wrinkles. Both UVA and UVB can contribute to the development of skin cancer – so it's important to find broad-spectrum coverage for full protection. Most UV blockers do not prevent sun-induced free radical formation, leaving skin vulnerable to inflammation and premature aging. Antioxidants in sunscreen formulations may help absorb those free radicals, fighting potential damage that results in photoaging. Of course, vitamins themselves may be susceptible to breaking down with UV rays. Look for ingredient technology that addresses this issue. Encapsulated vitamins are one way around this- the vitamins are stabilized within a capsule until subjected to UV radiation, after which these antioxidant vitamins are released to work alongside the sunscreens and provide enhanced photo protection.

Vitamin D can be acquired through many means. Recently I started buying mushrooms exposed to UV, making them a Vitamin D powerhouse. So remember, while Vitamin D is essential for health and immunity, don't skimp on the sunscreen which has a proven track record of preventing skin cancer. A healthy diet, exercise, spending time outdoors and preventing sun damage will yield happy skin all year-round. Consider yourself D-briefed!