

Geoff Bond
Nutritional Anthropologist
April 2008

Press Article

Sunlight is Human Food

When I was a child, my grandmother would chase me out of her house with the injunction, “play outside and make some vitamin D!” As long ago as the 1920’s researchers discovered that children need fresh air and sunshine to thrive. They had uncovered the role of sunlight in making the “sunshine vitamin” which they called vitamin D.

In our human homeland, the savannas of east Africa, our ancestors lived their entire lives stark naked under a tropical sun. Over the eons, we can be sure that our bodies came to depend on it. Our ancient ancestors’ skin had a copper tone. But as humans spread to less sunny areas, the ones who survived were those who had paler skins that soaked up the feeble rays of sunlight. This is a powerful demonstration of how important sunlight is to human survival.

I write almost monthly on this topic since whole populations are now vitamin D deficient due to a misplaced phobia of sunshine exposure. We have overcompensated for fears of melanoma skin cancer by staying indoors too much! Ironically, sunlight actually assists in preventing cancer.

In recent studies, women who lived in the sunniest parts of the United States had three times less risk of breast cancer compared to those who lived in gloomy, overcast regions. Men who had the most exposure to sunlight had the least risk of developing aggressive prostate cancer. Sun-soaked adults have half the risk of colon cancer. Incredible as it may seem, sunshine actually helps melanoma cancer sufferers recover. Sunlight prevents people getting lymphatic cancer. Dr. William Grant, Director of the Sunlight, Nutrition and Health Research Center, San Francisco (www.sunarc.org), estimates the American yearly death toll at 40,000 from lack-of-sunshine cancers. This is four times the number who die of skin cancer!

And that is just cancer. A host of studies demonstrate that sunlight deficiency increases risk of heart disease, osteoporosis, rickets, and even multiple sclerosis. And that is just the vitamin D connection. We now know that sunshine regulates hormones like melatonin, cortisol and serotonin. These affect our mental state. In the absence of sunlight we are more likely to be depressed, sleep badly, stressed, manic-depressive and even schizophrenic. We are all familiar with the gloomy feelings we suffer during the winter months in northern latitudes. As I insist in my lectures, we are all still tropical creatures and it is not for nothing that we seek out the sunshine and the palm trees. No one will lose money betting that populations will continue to migrate from UK to Cyprus!

So is it enough to obtain the vitamin D from the diet or supplements? No. Vitamin D is really a cocktail of compounds – and the recipe matters. Moreover, too much of any one of them is actually toxic. Dr Michael Holick of the Boston University school of Medicine finds that dietary vitamin D cannot substitute for sunlight. Given sunshine, the body concocts the precise recipe and quantities that it needs, whereas dietary vitamin D can never be quite right. Dr Holick found that judicious use of tanning beds is an excellent substitute in circumstances where natural sunlight is not available.

So make use of the wonderful Cyprus climate and get your daily dose of sunshine! Just be sensible, do enough to keep a good tan but avoid burning.

GeoffBond@naturaleater.com

Geoff Bond is a nutritional anthropologist and a recognized authority on what it means to be human in lifestyle terms. He has just completed a lecture tour in America bringing his insights to the doctors of major hospitals.

Geoff's latest book, *Deadly Harvest*, is the reference work for lifestyle anthropology and the mastering of degenerative disease. It is stocked by all good bookstores in Cyprus.

More information about Geoff's work on his website: www.naturaleater.com.

©2008 Geoff Bond