

More sun not the answer for getting more vitamin D

Ottawa, June 1, 2018 – The Canadian Dermatology Association (CDA) is warning the public that spending more time in the sun to increase vitamin D levels actually does more harm than good.

“Vitamin D is important for bone health, but seeking the sun in an attempt to get Vitamin D is counterproductive, due to the higher risk of skin cancer from UV radiation exposure,” explains Dr. Jennifer Beecker, certified dermatologist and National Chair of the CDA Sun Awareness Working Group.

Canadians can maintain vitamin D levels safely through foods fortified with Vitamin D or Vitamin D supplements. Unfortunately, new research into Canadians’ opinions and attitudes toward sun exposure and sun protection done for the CDA found that over half (53%) of respondents either strongly agree or agree that some sun exposure without sunscreen is required to meet the recommended vitamin D requirement.

“There is no need to seek increased or unprotected sun exposure to get more vitamin D,” adds Dr. Beecker. “The incidental sun exposure that Canadians receive during the summer, even with sunscreen use, is typically sufficient to maintain optimal vitamin D levels.”

With the decreased hours of sunlight during the winter months in Canada, the CDA recommends taking 1000 units of supplemental vitamin D per day, in consultation with their physician.

The CDA also strongly recommends that Canadians avoid indoor tanning to promote vitamin D production, as it increases a person’s risk of developing skin cancer, including melanoma. The CDA, along with Health Canada and the World Health Organization (WHO), strongly recommend that tanning beds are not used by anyone. The use of tanning beds by minors is illegal in all provinces in Canada.

As 2018 Sun Awareness Week continues, the CDA is advising Canadians to avoid seeking sun exposure, since there is strong evidence that UV radiation from the sun is the prime cause of skin cancer.

The importance of skin cancer should not be minimized, since melanoma and squamous cell carcinoma can be fatal. All forms of skin cancer require timely treatment, which can cause pain, scarring, and disfigurement.

In 2015, basal cell carcinoma affected 60,000 Canadians, squamous cell carcinoma affected 20,000, and melanoma, 6,800. Skin cancer is largely preventable by limiting exposure to the sun, protecting the skin from UV radiation, and avoiding tanning beds. Applying sunscreen with

a minimum SPF of 30, seeking shade, wearing sun protective clothing and sunglasses has been shown to prevent melanoma, squamous cell carcinoma, and precancerous actinic keratosis.

Sun Awareness Week

The Canadian Dermatology Association has organized the nation-wide early summer Sun Awareness Week since 1989. The aim is to educate Canadians about the dangers of too much sun and to help stop the rising incidence of skin cancer in Canada. This year's Sun Awareness Week is Monday, May 28 to Sunday, June 3, 2018.

About the CDA

The Canadian Dermatology Association, founded in 1925, represents Canadian certified dermatologists. The association provides easy access to a reliable source of medical knowledge on dermatology. CDA exists to advance the science and art of medicine and surgery related to the care of the skin, hair and nails; provide continuing professional development for its members; support and advance patient care; provide public education on sun protection and other aspects of skin health; and promote a lifetime of healthier skin, hair and nails. By doing so, CDA informs and empowers both medical professionals and the Canadian public. To learn more about what the work CDA does visit dermatology.ca or join the conversation on twitter.com/CdnDermatology, facebook.com/CdnDermatology, or instagram.com/canadiandermatologyassociation/.

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