

# *Spectacular Sunshine*

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You probably recognize the importance of the sun to life on earth. You know it provides heat, light and food. What can sunlight do for your personal health?

**Sunlight kills germs and mold.** That is why it is important to put the blankets, pillows and other items that are not washed often in the sunshine.

**Immunity is increased by exposure to sunlight,** and your body's resistance to infection is strengthened. White blood cells are increased, especially the protective lymphocytes. Antibodies are increased too. These effects can last up to three weeks. Even ten minutes of sun twice a week can greatly reduce the incidence of colds. Cancer of the breast, colon and prostate are less likely in people getting good exposure to sunshine.

**Bones are strengthened by sunlight.** It allows the body to make Vitamin D, which helps calcium absorption from the intestines and calcium deposit in building healthy bones. Sunlight prevents rickets and helps prevent and reverse osteoporosis.

**Red blood cells function better after sun exposure.** They have increased ability to carry and deliver oxygen to the body's cells. This will increase your energy and endurance and help prevent many diseases.

**Cholesterol is moderately lowered by sunlight exposure.** The cholesterol is changed to Vitamin D in the skin in the presence of unfiltered sunlight.

**Sense of wellbeing is promoted by sunlight, and the mood is elevated.** Daily exposure to natural sunlight will boost melatonin output, which also improves sleep. For most people sunlight is an important therapy, especially if combined with exercise, in preventing and treating acute and chronic depression. Remember to try to catch any possible ray of sunshine during winter's cold and gloomy months.

**Warning** - Small amounts of sunlight are wonderful. Large amounts are dangerous! Limit your exposure to the sun. A goal of up to 30 minutes a day is realistic for most people. Initially you may need to limit this to 5 minutes if you are fair skinned, or 15 minutes for darker skins, with gradual increases. Remember that wet skin burns faster and ultraviolet rays of the sun can reflect off snow, sand and water, greatly increasing your exposure. Ultraviolet rays can still burn even if it is a cloudy day. Never allow yourself to burn. Sunburn raises the risk of skin cancer.