

Sunlight and vitamin D necessary for public health

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The *Journal of the American College of Nutrition* is pleased to offer Open Access to a scientific consensus paper, "Sunlight and Vitamin D: Necessary for Public Health," authored by scientists from the University of California, San Diego, Creighton University, Boston University Medical Center, and the Medical University of South Carolina, along with other research contributors. The paper presents information to illustrate that UV exposure not only provides the benefits of vitamin D production, but also many additional health benefits not related to vitamin D. The current culture of sun avoidance in the United States carries with it both health risks and quantifiable harm.

The consensus was developed by GrassrootsHealth, a nonprofit [public health](#) research organization, and was led by Dr. Cedric Garland, professor of family and preventive medicine at the University of California, San Diego and Dr. Robert P. Heaney, Professor of Medicine and John A. Creighton University Professor Emeritus of Creighton University.

"Humans have adapted to sun exposure over many thousands of years and derive numerous physiological benefits from UV exposure in addition to [vitamin D](#)," said Carole Baggerly, executive director of GrassrootsHealth and co-author of the paper. "These benefits far outweigh those derived from vitamin D intake by supplements, and therefore [sun avoidance](#) being recommended by the US Surgeon General and others is unnecessarily putting Americans at risk." The paper concludes that moderate UV exposure is a natural way to improve

human health. In fact, patients suffering from cutaneous tuberculosis and other conditions stand to benefit immediately from the use of heliotherapy in their treatments. This is consistent with the results of a survey released this week by GrassrootsHealth, which can be accessed at www.grassrootshealth.net, in which 99% of dermatologists surveyed believe that UV exposure is a viable form of treatment for non-lethal skin conditions like psoriasis.

"We urge the US Surgeon General's office and other public health entities to do the work needed to recommend UV exposure levels that are both beneficial and safe, and which favor scientifically-researched information over current cultural norms," Baggerly added. The paper notes that further study is needed to better understand the additional health benefits of UV light beyond vitamin D, including those related to the release of nitric oxide, production of beta-endorphin, and regulation of circadian rhythms – all important components of life-long health and well-being.

More information: "Sunlight and Vitamin D: Necessary for Public Health." [DOI: 10.1080/07315724.2015.1039866](https://doi.org/10.1080/07315724.2015.1039866)

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