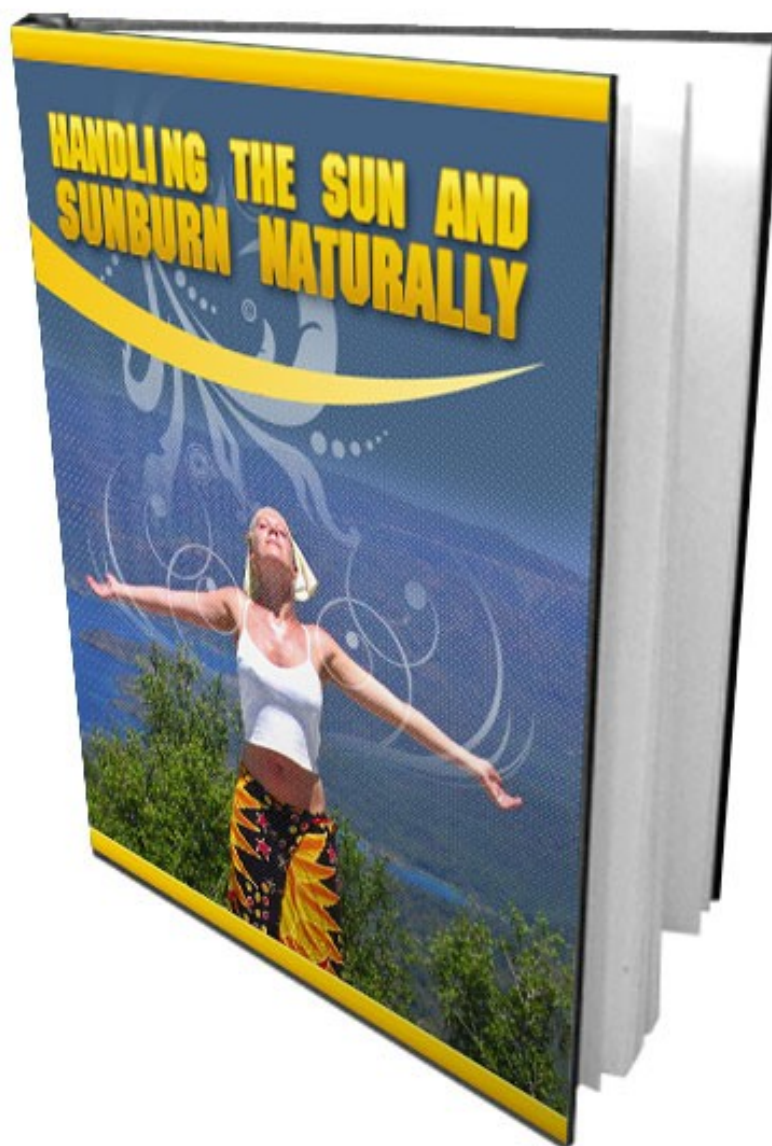




Handling the sun and sunburn naturally Free Chapter





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Introduction

Apropos very little, here's a useless piece of information with which to baffle your friends, colleagues and family members.

You've possibly heard of people being described of as 'posh', meaning that they were somewhat upper-class or in many situations, that for some unfathomable reason, they *think* they are. Did you ever wonder where the word comes from?

Well, the answer is, it's an acronym for 'port out, starboard home', which is a reference to the days of the British empire when the ladies – the real ladies – who were sailing out to India would stay on the port side of the ship whilst they would stick to starboard on the way back.

Why? Because they didn't want their perfect milk white skin tainted by any hint of having been in the sun! Imagine that, going to all that effort to avoid even the merest tinge of facial redness because it was considered low-class, something that only the common hoi-poloι would ever be subjected to or even contemplate!

How times change.

From the mid-1990's onwards, most people couldn't wait to get away from it all so they could disrobe on the beach before subjecting their body to the seemingly warming, calming ministrations of a blazing sun in a clear blue sky.

The cost of air travel fell so that overseas vacations became a genuine possibility for millions of people for the very first time and, boy, did they take advantage of that fact.





People who had never before travelled much further than the family car would take them were now able to fly thousands of miles to chase the sun. Thus, they were able to expose themselves to the warmth of the sun for the very first time, and they could not believe their luck.

Of course, because of their inexperience, most of these people suffered sunburn to a greater or lesser degree at some point, and equally obviously, most of them had very little idea about what to do when they did so.

In this guide, I am therefore going to look at three things.

Firstly, I am going to expand upon exactly why the 'posh' ladies got it right whereas for most of the second half of the 20th century, we were all getting it very wrong as far as the sun and its potential 'benefits' were concerned.

Secondly, I want to bring the whole thing bang up-to-date by looking at what you can do to minimize the dangers represented by the sun when you go on holiday, because there is no doubt that playing on the beach in the sunshine is an essential part of the family holiday for many millions of people all over the world. And of course, the main objective is to focus on natural ways of minimizing the dangers posed by being out in the sun for a lengthy period of time.

Thirdly, I am going to highlight natural ways of dealing with the adverse effects of too much exposure to the sun.

Although it should be possible with sensible precautions to limit the chances of sunburn happening to you or family members, it is





unfortunately a fact that balancing enough sunshine against too much is not always a particularly easy task. This is especially true if you are someone to whom regular exposure to the sun is unusual because you have far less natural ability to withstand the effects of sunshine.





The sun and safety issues

The risks...

Back in the days when people were taking their first 'sunshine vacations', the rich and famous – movie stars, fashion designers and the like – were making it increasingly fashionable to slowly bake yourself to a golden brown courtesy of the sun, and the browner you were, the more of a status symbol it was.

A deep, rich sun tan was accepted far and wide as a sign that you had money, and lots of it. After all, you were only going to get a tan like that if you could afford to take lots of time off to go somewhere exotic and expensive for a lengthy period of time because a week on the beach after a relatively short haul flight wasn't going to cut it.

And as for sunbeds and the subsequent tanning booth revolution, well, what were they?

In those days, they were the 'secret' that most people didn't know about the 'tans of the stars', something that only the rich and famous could even contemplate indulging themselves in.

Hence, when sunbeds became available to the general public in the 80's and 90's through the explosion of 'health clubs' (the irony!), sun bed centers and solariums, it was no surprise that people flocked to them to get themselves baked to a golden brown on the cheap.

The sunbed 'revolution' enabled every man, woman and child (and yes, there were millions of children using sunbeds on a regular basis, at least in the UK) to get the exact same color as their favorite celebrities





at a fraction of the price, and after all, who doesn't want to look healthy?

And that's the biggest mistake right there.

Having spent centuries avoiding the direct rays of the sun because men and women intrinsically knew that seeing your skin go red and then brown could not be an entirely healthy thing, the picture was suddenly reversed.

All of a sudden, exposing as much of your body as possible to the ultraviolet rays of the sun was immensely beneficial and health giving, a viewpoint that represented the exact opposite of that adopted by the Victorians and every generation before them.

There are now millions of people all over the world who are learning that listening to previous generations might have been a very good idea.

Now we know that whilst sunshine is essential for all life on Earth, it does not necessarily follow that lying out in the sun for hours on end is going to do you any good in respect of your long-term health.

Spending hours exposed to the ultraviolet rays of the sun in an attempt to acquire a 'nice tan' is not necessarily good for you because the evidence about the most of serious effects of over exposure to ultraviolet light make the picture all too alarmingly clear.

There is now plenty to suggest that prolonged exposure to sunlight and to the ultraviolet rays it bombards your skin with is a very bad thing for your health, although it is only fair to say that there are people on the





other side of the debate who maintain that exposure to the sun is more good for you than bad.

So that you are in a position to make an informed decision in this debate, let us consider both sides of the argument.

The skin cancer facts

In the USA, UK, Australia and many other countries in the world, the most common of all human cancers is skin cancer. And according to most authorities including the [American Cancer Society](#), the majority of these skin cancers are related to exposure to the sun.

There are three different types of skin cancer known as [basal cell carcinoma](#) (BCC), [squamous cell cancer](#) (SCC) and [melanoma](#).

All of the three different types of skin cancer are malignant, but the first two categories are unlikely to spread to other parts of the body. And in all three cases, early diagnosis of the condition generally leads to a complete cure, meaning that being aware of these different cancers is essential.

Skin cancer is the fastest growing form of the condition, with in excess of 1 million new cases diagnosed every year in the USA and hundreds of thousands in the UK and Australia. In fact, bizarre as it may seem, skin cancer is now growing faster in the UK (with a climate that no-one who has ever been there could ever really describe as being 'sunny' without being extremely generous) than it is in Australia, perhaps because the extreme levels of sunshine in Australia have already brought home the dangers of overexposure to most long-term residents.





Of the three forms of skin cancer, BCC and SCC are by far more common than melanoma, which is a very good thing because these are considerably less dangerous forms of skin cancer.

Nevertheless, according to the American Cancer Society statistics, there will be nearly 69,000 new cases of melanoma diagnosed in the USA in 2009, and melanoma will be responsible for perhaps 8650 of the 11,590 anticipated deaths from skin cancer in the year.

The picture in other countries where the growth of skin cancer is alarming is pretty much the same. Around 75% of all skin cancer deaths are caused by melanoma, a particularly aggressive form of cancer that attacks other organs in the body if it is not dealt with extremely quickly.

And as hundreds of websites attest, it is now pretty well indisputable that the main cause of skin cancer is exposure to ultraviolet light and the main source of ultraviolet light to which we are likely to be exposed is the sun or artificial versions of it when we 'enjoy' a tanning booth or a sunbed session.

You have already seen the ACS evidence (i.e. the evidence from an internationally recognized cancer authority) but the information emanating from the UK [Cancer Research Organisation](#) and the [Australian Department of Health and Ageing](#) all tells very much the same story.

Skin cancer is primarily caused by overexposure to ultraviolet light from the sun and therefore, if you protect yourself from the sun, your





chances of contracting deadly melanoma or any other form of skin cancer are significantly reduced.

The light of the sun contains three different types of ultraviolet light, being UVA, UVB and UVC. All three forms of ultraviolet light are in effect a form of radiation, exactly the same kind of thing that you would expect to be subjected to if for example you needed to have a part of your body x-rayed.

When the dangers of ultraviolet light first began to become apparent to scientists and medical professionals, it was [originally suggested that UVB](#) was the danger, but that has since been modified to include UVA as well.

There is now evidence to suggest that both of these forms of ultraviolet light damage the DNA of the body, and it is DNA that controls the healthy growth of cells, including those of the skin. Consequently, because this basic building block of a healthy body is out of shape, it helps to encourage the uncontrolled, disorderly cell growth that we call cancer.

There are many factors that dictate whether you more susceptible to skin cancer than others. If you fall under any of the following categories, it is believed that your skin cancer risk is elevated:

- Those who have fair skin that is easily burned and prone to freckles or other common skin markings.
- People who have suffered at least one case of severe sunburn earlier in life.





- Those who have fair hair and/or blue or green eyes.
- People with naturally depleted skin pigmentation caused by other medical conditions such as [albinism](#).
- Those who have many moles on their skin, especially unusually shaped or colored moles, or large ones that they have had from birth.
- People who have suffered skin cancer before, or have family members who have suffered in the past.

It is important to note that these causative factors can work in combination. If for example you are a fair skinned, red haired, blue-eyed individual with several unusual moles who suffered really bad sunburn a couple of times as a youngster (which with this physical make up is extremely likely), the chances of continued or repeated exposure to the sun causing cancer are a great deal higher.

This highlights one of the main reasons why it is so important to know how to prevent sunburn and how to treat it if it unfortunately happens. Anything that increases your melanoma risk levels is something to be taken extremely seriously. Managing the risk of sunburn before the event is by far and away the best way of treating this risk with the respect that it so obviously deserves.

And remember that sunbeds and tanning booths are in no way, shape or form a safe alternative to exposure to natural sunlight.

In fact, the ultraviolet radiation issuing from sunbeds is considerably higher than that of the sun, which is one of the reasons why more





[health conscious countries like Germany](#) are now passing laws to ban youngsters from using sunbeds. Given that the statistics in Germany suggest that over 4 million youngsters in the country regularly subject themselves to a sunbed session, there are grounds for thinking that the law banning them from doing so could not come a moment too soon...

The Vitamin D argument

Most people are aware that vitamins are essential for good health, and that there are many different types of vitamins which affect different bodily organs and functions. Whilst we are all familiar with the more common vitamins and where they come from such as the presence of vitamin C in citrus fruits, blueberries and vitamin A in dark green and yellow vegetables, many are less well aware of vitamin D for a few reasons.

The first reason is suggested by the fact that most know that you can get vitamin C from oranges and vitamin A comes from broccoli, but they have no idea what foods vitamin D comes from. Secondly, whilst many people could make a recently educated guess at what the more commonly recognized vitamins do, very few would have any idea about the purposes of vitamin D.

To a large extent therefore, vitamin D is the 'forgotten vitamin' in terms of public perception of health and wellness. However, it is in reality an extremely important nutrient that is responsible for many critical medical functions in your metabolism.





For example, because the primary function of this particular vitamin is to promote healthy calcium flow throughout your bloodstream, you are likely to suffer many calcium related problems if vitamin D is not present in sufficient amounts. Such conditions as brittle and misshapen bones are likely to be a result of vitamin D deficiency, whilst there are also indications that a deficiency may play a part in fibromyalgia, immune system weaknesses and so on.

On top of this, there is plenty of evidence to suggest that [many people suffer psychological problems](#) or [depression](#) as a result of vitamin D deficiency, with most cases of what is known as Seasonal Affective Disorder ('winter depression' or the 'winter blues') being related to a lack of this particular vitamin.

All of this is relevant when considering the positives and negatives of exposure to sunlight (the 'for' and 'against' as it were) because sunlight is absolutely essential if your body is to be able to process vitamin D properly.

Unlike other vitamins, there are surprisingly few foods from which we can get vitamin D and in every case where we do absorb this vitamin from our foods, it is because the food source has not been able to synthesize the substance properly. For instance, although the richest source of the basic building blocks of vitamin D is fish, these fish only contain these elemental nutrients because they were produced by the algae that they have eaten.

It is important to understand that the basic components of vitamin D are essentially inert, inactive until they are activated in your body. And





the primary way that these inert vitamin components are converted into an active nutrient is through the action of sunlight on our skin.

The fact that a significant number of otherwise healthy, happy people suffer depression in the depths of winter when there is no sunlight is evidence of the fact that without sun, we go without vitamin D and perhaps suffer the adverse health effects caused by this deficiency as a result.

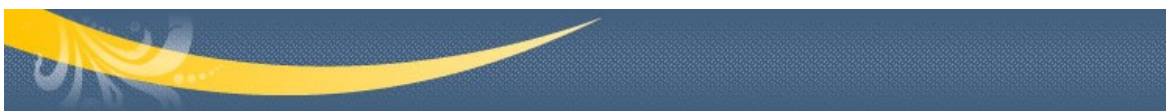
Indeed, one of the main forms of treatment for 'winter blues' sufferers is through the exposure to artificial (and extremely low powered) ultraviolet light as this is the only way they can make the necessary vitamin D to stave off these blues until the sun comes out again.

This counterargument to the one presented by the 'skin cancer lobby' has just as much validity as does the other side of the debate. It is undoubtedly a fact that without sunshine, we are not capable of processing vitamin D effectively and that without it, most people will suffer physical health problems, whilst many will also endure psychological difficulties as well.

What conclusion should be drawn?

Having been presented with both sides of the 'is sunshine good for you' argument, I would suggest one thing should be abundantly clear.

Whilst too much exposure to the sun is clearly potentially dangerous, particularly for certain types of people, a lack of exposure to the sun can be equally harmful. Consequently, the only sensible conclusion that





can be drawn from this is that a balance needs to be struck between exposing your body to sunlight and keeping covered up at other times.

Understanding that this balance is necessary is essential if you are going to handle the sun and the potential of suffering sunburn in a sensible but entirely natural way.

You must appreciate that whilst many hours out in the sun stripped to the waist will do wonders for your vitamin D levels, it is also likely to be the precursor to many hours of severe pain and it could possibly trigger a far more serious condition such as melanoma.

Thus, sunshine is something that you need, but not too much of it...

