

FAST FACTS

Healthful sun exposure

Sunlight regulates the body

Sun exposure is essential for many processes in the body, including the production of vitamin D. The sun is the very cornerstone of life.

The sun is a vital source of energy, nourishment and life force for humans. Ensuring we spend time outdoors, with exposure to sun in a sensible way is life promoting. Some benefits include:

Vitamin D production

- The most well-known benefit of sun exposure is the synthesis of vitamin D in the skin. Vitamin D is crucial for calcium absorption in the gut, which is essential for maintaining healthy bones and teeth
- Vitamin D deficiency can lead to conditions like rickets in children and osteomalacia in adults

Blood pressure regulation

- Sunlight exposure on the skin releases a compound called nitric oxide, which may help lower blood pressure by dilating blood vessels

Improved sleep

- Exposure to natural sunlight during the day, especially in the morning, can help regulate the body's internal biological clock, or circadian rhythm and the production of melatonin

Healthful sun exposure

In Australia, as a country with high Ultra Violet (UV) exposure, ensuring we are smart about our time in the sun is important. To experience the healthful benefits of the sun, while keeping your skin safe, consider:

Time of day: Avoid extended sun exposure during the middle of the day, but a sensible 10-15 minutes is a good way to synthesise vitamin D

UV index: A higher UV index indicates a higher risk of UV radiation from the sun. If the UV index is 3 or above, you should protect your skin and eyes

Geographical location: The closer you are to the equator, the stronger the sun's rays

Cloud cover: Clouds can reduce UV radiation, but not entirely. Even on a cloudy day, UV radiation levels can still be harmful

Protection: Wear protective clothing and a broad-spectrum sunscreen with a minimum SPF of 30. Re-apply every 2 hours and after swimming or sweating

Skin type: People with lighter skin, eyes, and hair are at a higher risk of UV damage



Mood regulation and mental health

- Sunlight can increase the brain's release of serotonin and helping feel calm and focused
- Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) is a form of depression that occurs at certain times of the year, usually in the winter when sunlight exposure is minimal. Light therapy, which often involves mimicking natural sunlight, is a common treatment

Immune system

- Vitamin D plays a significant role in the immune system and can help in warding off infections