

The Sun-Friend or foe?

Happy spring everyone!

Well, I think it's safe to say that most of us are ready for some sun and warmer temperatures after the long, cold winter months. New Englanders feel particularly starved for the sun's warming rays after being cooped up and bundled up for so long. Physiologically, we need the sun and we really need it daily to thrive but at our latitude, we simply do not get our required share.

We have discussed the benefits of the sun in previous wellness columns. You may remember the importance of spending time in the sun without sun glasses on a daily basis. The UV rays are needed to charge our brain; in particular the pituitary gland and hypothalamus. These glands will in turn produce vital hormones that are critical for body function and health. The sun's rays will hit the retina of the eye and literally charge the brain by supporting the function of these glands. When we don't get enough full spectrum, natural light our brain simply gets starved for energy and cannot function well. This affects our mood, our sleep, our patience –well, all our bodily functions!

When we study NATURAL DESIGN, we realize that our modern life style does not always support our body's innate requirements. We spend too much time indoors, under artificial light, in front of computers and we do not get enough movement, sleep or good nutrition; no wonder over 50% of the US population now has at least one chronic disease!

So what about the healing benefits of the sun? We have already established how it charges our brain, therefore supporting all bodily functions. It is also required for VITAMIN D production. Virtually all New Englanders are deficient in this critically important vitamin and that comes at a high price. Scientists know of 100's of functions of vit D and more are regularly discovered. Vitamin D helps you absorb calcium from your food, supporting strong bones, is critical in hormone production, is vital for your immune function and helps you regulate your blood sugar, to name just a few. Vitamin D is produced when the sun hits the bare skin and the process is then concluded in the liver and the kidneys. Because we cover up our skin in the winter and apply sunscreen in the summer, our poor body has little chance to even get close to the required levels of vitamin D production (more on sunscreen in the next issue). It is therefore considered necessary to supplement with vit D2 and D3 as food alone is not a sufficient source of vitamin D. The daily recommended dose as determined by the FDA is much too low (600 IU/day) and can in most cases easily be brought to 4000-6000 IU/ day for thriving. Vitamin D is an inexpensive supplement and should be used by most year around (at least October-May). It could be said that this is a very cost effective way of giving your family an immune boost! And by all means get out in the sun!

Until next time!

The SHS Wellness Committee

(Your required vitamin D levels can be tested and supplementation discussed with your health care provider. Most MDs will however refer to the FDA established RDA which is considered too low to for your body's actual requirement.)