

Should we spend time in the sun?

Philosophy



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Sunbathing and getting a suntan is getting more and more popular nowadays. Researches show a trend of getting suntan, just for fashion and good-looking, as they consider suntans to be healthy and attractive. Especially in the case of teenagers, no matter boys or girls, who mostly do this because of following their idols' appearance or even as a habit or an obsession (Source 1 and 2). Because of this, more and more people tend to spend their holidays abroad as to get a suntan by holidaying in hot countries and using sunbed.

Between 1971 and 2001, the number of trips had increased from 4. millions to 38. 7 millions, making a huge difference of over 9 times (Source 3). Also people are spending a lot of money to create fake tan and to use sunbed. Unfortunately, researches show that people who sunbathe show a higher risk of getting skin cancer, and the earlier they start, the higher the risk (Source 2 and 4). From the researches, I can see that in recent years, more and more people are willing to spend money on using sunbeds and creating fake tans (Source 2), so the income and popularity of these businesses increases.

Also, a trend of holidaying in hot and sunny countries is shown (Source 3 and 4), creating more business opportunities for tourism in countries such as Italy and Spain. It is believed that spending time in the sun is the main cause of skin cancer (Source 5 and 6). The energy from the sun contains Ultraviolet (UV) radiation, and there are two types of rays that exist in it, which are Ultraviolet A (UVA) and Ultraviolet B (UVB). They damage DNA, the genetic material that makes up genes. Genes control the growth and overall health of skin cells.

If the genetic damage is severe, a normal skin cell may grow abnormally in the way of cancer cells. UV can also cause sunburn, and other damage that makes the skin look prematurely old and wrinkled. That is why many protection attempts are taken, such as avoiding excessive exposure to the sun (Source 6), and using sunscreen to increase our protection, the higher the Sun Protection Factor (SPF), the higher the protection you get (Source 7 and 8) The chances of getting a suntan, sunburn or skin cancer depend on many factors.

One of the main factors is your skin colour (Source 9 and 10), the darker your skin, the lower the chance of getting any of the above. The other factor is the Sun Protection Factor of the sunscreen you apply (Source 8). The more you apply and the higher the factor gives more protection, and this results in less solar energy absorption. Another factor I found is the life expectancy. Due in large part to advances in medical technology, life expectancy for newborns has increased continuously over the past 70 years, from 57. 1 years in 1929 to 77. years in 2004, and an increase of more than two years in the past decade. (Source 11)

Life expectancy affects the amount of sun exposure in a lifetime, which causes a higher risk of getting skin cancer because of a longer time of sun exposure. On the other hand, moderate and sensible sunlight exposure can help prevent skin cancer and some other cancers. In the case of skin cancer, sunlight causes vitamin D to synthesize in the body, giving some protection from the risk. This production of vitamin D can act as an immunity response from the body receiving Ultraviolet B rays from sunlight (Source 12, 13 and 14).

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Studies also show that people who get malignant melanoma but also have a high amount to daily sun exposure have a higher survival rate than people with less exposure. It is said that sunlight is more powerful than any drug, which is safe, effective and available free of charge (Source 12). I also found out that the amount of vitamin D our body need can be fulfilled by around thirty minutes in the sun each week (Source 15). Having some sunshine also affects our mood, as it stimulates the pineal gland to produce mood enhancing chemicals, called tryptamines in the brain (Source 14).

The sun can also help you achieve a good look if you like a healthy suntan (Source 14). In my opinion, I think we should not spend time in the sun, because our health is very important, and we should never take the risk of having skin cancer, especially not because of the desire for a suntan and to sacrifice their health. I think it is a waste of money and time to sunbathe. As for the production of vitamin D in our skin, which can be easily fulfilled by a thirty minutes sun exposure each week, we can do that by just having a walk.