

# Get Real! Myths About UV

## Myths and Misconceptions About UV and Tanning

Source: [www.tanningtruth.com](http://www.tanningtruth.com)

The purveyors of sun-scare, in inexplicable blind zeal for their cause, have made some outlandish and unsupportable statements about sunshine, UV, Vitamin D and tanning. Think about this: Because sunshine is free, there is no powerful pro-sun PR lobby aggressively countering these misstatements. Think about it some more: Just imagine if a large pharmaceutical company *did* own the sun and was able to send you a bill for your monthly sunshine. The mass-media marketing message you got about sunshine – based on the same science that exists today – would be completely positive. The statements that follow show you that, when it comes to “sun scare” marketing is more important than science.

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### They Said It:

“I can remember as a youth when I was growing up I had gone to movies to see that the population was living underground because of severe solar energy and the lack of protection. In some vision as I grow older I see us moving to more shelters and perhaps underground living because of these hazards.” - *Dr. Wilma Bergfeld, then-president of the American Academy of Dermatology at Derm Update, the AAD’s 1996 annual media day, Nov. 13, 1996.*

### Get Real!

It’s an oldie, but it’s still the misguided mantra of the AAD today. AAD still believes people do not need sunshine at all to make vitamin D and that people should turn to dietary supplements instead of Mother Nature. While underground living may be fine for the most extreme anti-sun lobbyists, the science in the decade since Bergfeld made this statement has only strengthened the case that human beings live naturally in sunlight and that we need regular sun exposure to be healthy. Anti-sun lobbyists like Bergfeld, unfortunately, have confused the good cause of fighting against sunburn and overexposure with a misguided attempt to get people out of the sun completely.

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### They Said It:

“People who practice proper sun protection and are concerned that they are not getting enough vitamin D should either take a multivitamin or drink a few glasses of vitamin D fortified milk every day. ...Dietary intake of vitamin D can completely and easily fulfill our needs.” – *Dr. Raymond L. Cornelison Jr., then-president of the American Academy of Dermatology, in a July 3, 2003 AAD press release entitled, “Vitamin D + Sunshine = Bad Medicine.”*

### Get Real!

Humans make 90 percent of their vitamin D from sun exposure. That’s the natural way. To recommend that supplements and milk replace what Nature intended is unnatural as well as impractical. You would

have to drink a full quart of fortified whole milk every day to attain the current median recommendation for vitamin D. What's more, that level is now regarded as considerably too low by Vitamin D scientists, who foresee that recommendations will eventually be increased as much as five to 10 times their current levels. There is also growing consensus that supplements and diet alone will not provide sufficient vitamin D without additional sun exposure to the skin. The American Cancer Society and the Canadian Cancer Society have both recognized that some sunlight in moderation is necessary, even though both organizations fall short of advocating tanning. Despite all the evidence to the contrary, many anti-sun lobbyists have stuck with their rhetoric that humans make sufficient vitamin D from incidental sun exposure. If this were the case, how would it be possible for 40-90 percent of the population to be Vitamin D deficient, as has been demonstrated by several studies, if, as dermatologists also say, people are getting too much sun exposure? The outcomes are divergent.

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### **They Said It:**

*“Avoiding the sun at all costs, for most of us, simply doesn't make sense.” – Dr. Len Lichtenfeld, American Cancer Society's Chief Medical Officer, in a statement issued May 27, 2006. ACS and the Canadian Cancer Society now recognize that some sunlight in moderation is necessary.*

### **Get Real!**

Bravo. That's a great first step toward bringing common sense and Mother Nature back into the mix. Unfortunately, the anti-sun lobby hasn't kept pace. Prime example: When asked to speak on behalf of the dermatology community to a major conference of worldwide Vitamin D scientists in Victoria, Canada, in April 2006, Boston University Dermatology Chair Dr. Barbara Gilchrest (Who in 2004 asked Vitamin D pioneer Dr. Michael Holick to resign from his dermatology post because he dared to write a book suggesting that UV exposure had health benefits) told the group, “When you tell a 15-year-old to get 10-15 minutes of unprotected sun exposure, they just don't get it.” That brought groans from the researchers in the audience and an unidentified reply, “If you don't trust people to do the right thing, I think we have a problem.”

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### **They Said It:**

*“This (melanoma) epidemic is so severe that in the year 2012 malignant melanoma will be the leading cancer above breast and lung and colon, and may also be the leading cause of death all over the world.” - Dr. Wilma Bergfeld, then-president of the American Academy of Dermatology, at Derm Update, the AAD's 1996 annual media day, Nov. 13, 1996.*

### **Get Real!**

Not even close. American Cancer Society statistics on these four cancers still speak for themselves:

Estimated Cancer Death Rates By Site and Year

Year - Breast - Lung - Colon - Melanoma

1997 - 44,190 - 160,400 - 46,600 - 7,300

2006 - 41,430 - 162,460 - 55,170 - 7,910

Source: American Cancer Society Anti-sun lobbyists often have called melanoma an “epidemic.” In 1995, world-renowned research dermatologist and photobiologist Dr. Fred Urbach chastised his peers at an FDA open forum for this characterization saying, “I wish you would look up the meaning of the word epidemic in your Oxford English Dictionary. Epidemics happen suddenly.” In fact, melanoma incidence has been rising for nearly 80 years, primarily in older men who are still much more likely to contract this disease. Yet the anti-sun lobby has directed its screenings and marketing attention at younger women who are more likely to purchase dermatologic services (Cosmetic botox injections are the fastest growing dermatologic procedure) and cosmetic products with sunscreen. The allegation that melanoma is increasing rapidly in young people is not supported by data and has obvious confounders that the anti-sun lobby conspicuously ignores in its regular discussion. Primarily, one must consider that dermatology’s ability to detect melanoma has improved steadily in the past half century (better techniques, better equipment, more dermatologists per capita and more screenings). Because more and more young people visit dermatologists today (dermatology’s fastest growing procedures are cosmetic, with cosmetic botox injections leading the way. These procedures, of course, are marketed to younger people), it is understandable that dermatologists identify more melanomas. This also explains why – despite the allegation that more young people are getting melanoma, there is not a corresponding increase in the mortality rate from this disease in young people. In fact, in Canadian cancer registries the melanoma incidence and mortality rates are declining for women under age 50. That’s not to say people shouldn’t be vigilant about taking the right precautions. But the profit-driven anti-sun lobby has a track record of bending the numbers to overstate their case. That’s not science. That’s politics.

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### **They Said It:**

“Tans acquired at indoor tanning parlors have been studied and have a very poor ability to prevent sunburning.” - *The Skin Cancer Foundation, June 2006*

### ***Get Real!***

Care to get a second opinion? How about 30 million second opinions! A cornerstone of the indoor tanning industry for more than two decades has been the ability of base tans, in proper combination with sunscreen usage outdoors, to protect people from sunburns on sunny vacations. Literally millions of indoor tanners will tell you it works. And it does. Here’s what the sun-scare lobby either fails to understand or won’t admit: Sunscreen, as a product, is designed to prevent sunburn. A base tan essentially multiplies the ability of sunscreen to do its job. It’s all about protecting skin cells, one cell at a time, from overexposure and burning. Because a tan essentially enshrouds skin cells one cell at a time – much like the hard-shell coating of an M&M candy protects the chocolate – sunscreen is better able to do its job. Think about it. An average indoor tanner might begin his or her tanning regimen with a five minute session and, over the course of three to four weeks, gradually work up to 15 to 20 minute sessions under the supervision of a professionally trained tanning operator. That means – after building a base tan – he or she can be exposed to 3-4 times as much sunlight before sunburn develops. And here’s the thing the anti-sun lobby doesn’t tell you: Professional tanning facilities recommend the proper use of sunscreen outdoors in situations where sunburn is a possibility. So the base tan makes the tanner’s skin 3-4 times more resilient, which multiplies the effectiveness of the sunscreen he or she applies. That’s a huge difference on a sub-tropical vacation and most likely means the difference between burning and not burning. It’s also the reason why tanning industry research suggests that a higher percentage of indoor tanning clients use sunscreen outdoors than non-tanners, and likely is part of the reason why indoor tanners sunburn outdoors less often than non-tanners.

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## **They Said It:**

“Speculative at best.” - *Dr. James Spencer, one of the American Academy of Dermatology’s most-quoted anti-sun pundits, in the June 2006 issue of Dermatology Times on research connecting health benefits with sunlight-derived Vitamin D.*

## ***Get Real!***

One can only speculate how Spencer defines the word speculative. Researchers have known for more than 60 years that many forms of cancer were much less prevalent in sunny parts of the world. Since then, the connection to sunlight and vitamin D has been established, and in the past decade the causative mechanism by which vitamin D plays an important part in cell growth regulation has been well documented. The studies are there, and while further research is needed, calling the connection “speculative” is conspicuously unscientific. Instead of supporting the logical continuation of research on sunlight-induced vitamin D – which has massive positive public health ramifications — the dermatology industry’s lobbying groups have simply denied that the science existed. That’s not science – it’s politics.

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## **They Said It:**

“Many sunscreen companies have just teeter-tottered staying in business. It’s not easy getting rich in the sunscreen business.” – Boston University Dermatology Chair Barbara Gilchrest, in a guest lecture at the 13th Workshop on Vitamin D, April 8, 2006 in Victoria, Canada. Gilchrest was refuting the suggestion that sunscreen companies profit from preaching all-out fear of the sun.

## ***Get Real!***

Sunscreen companies are enjoying record profits right now. Gilchrest apparently doesn’t read sunscreen companies’ financial statements very closely. For instance:

- \$9 billion pharmaceutical giant Schering-Plough (Coppertone) reported sun-care related sales of \$204 million in 2005, up 16 percent from 2004 and up 40 percent from 2003, making the division one of Schering-Plough’s best performers by percentage growth.
- \$50 billion Johnson & Johnson’s consumer products unit – which markets sun care products like Neutrogena and Aveeno, is one of the pharmaceutical giant’s most profitable divisions, with increased sales of \$2.36 billion in the first quarter of 2006 alone. Neutrogena’s marketing uses some of the most aggressive sun-scare tactics of any sunscreen company.

Gilchrest and her peers apparently have an antiquated definition of what a sunscreen company is. It isn’t just a beach product anymore. Most women’s cosmetics today include sunscreen in their products – marketing usage and need of the product based on over-hyping fear of the sun. Because of this, most women wear sunscreen 365 days a year in any climate – even when sunburn isn’t a possibility – because the American Academy of Dermatology and sunscreen manufacturers have scared them into over-use of sunscreen. “Sun scare” – teaching total fear of the sun instead of sunburn prevention – is a huge multibillion-dollar business run by even larger multibillion-dollar cosmeceutical corporations.