

[Dr. Heaney](#) has the advantage of being an MD and also a researcher. Additionally, he's on the editorial review panel for many of the [most important nutritional journals in the world](#).

You will hear Dr. Heaney point out there are many misconceptions about melanoma – the most dangerous type of skin cancer that accounts for more than 75 percent of skin cancer deaths.

Despite all the bad press linking sun exposure to skin cancer, there's almost no evidence at all to support that stance. There is, however, plenty of evidence to the contrary.

Appropriate Sun Exposure More Likely to Prevent Than Cause Melanoma

Over the years, several studies have already confirmed that appropriate sun exposure actually helps *prevent* skin cancer. In fact, melanoma occurrence has been found to decrease with greater sun exposure, and can be increased by sunscreens.

One such [study](#) discovered that melanoma patients that had higher levels of sun exposure were less likely to die than other melanoma patients, and patients who already had melanoma and got a lot of sun exposure were prone to a less aggressive tumor type.

Another more recent Italian study, published in the [European Journal of Cancer](#) in June 2008, also confirms and supports earlier studies showing improved survival rates in melanoma patients who were previously exposed to *more* sunlight.

Not only that, but melanoma is actually more common in indoor workers than in outdoor workers to begin with. It is also more common on regions of your body that are not exposed to the sun at all. Additionally, UVB radiation has been found to delay the appearance of melanoma if you are genetically predisposed or prone to skin cancer.

How can this be? Melanoma occurrence is rising, and experts are still warning you to avoid sun exposure to cut your risk. Are they really that wrong?

In a word, yes!

What is the Real Cause Behind Rising Melanoma Rates?

Well, what they're not telling you is that melanoma rates are rising as sun exposure and vitamin D status is decreasing dramatically. Statistics alone will tell you there is a serious flaw in the current recommendations to stay out of the sun to avoid skin cancer.

More recent research into vitamin D and skin damage shows that although the sun does increase genetic damage in your skin, and can cause skin cancer, your body has a cleverly designed system to avert this risk.

When you stay out of the sun entirely, you effectively avoid the system nature created to help prevent skin cancer naturally, because **the key to unlock this mechanism is vitamin D.**

As you probably know by now, vitamin D is formed in your skin from exposure to sunlight. **The vitamin D then goes directly to the genes in your skin where it helps prevent the types of abnormalities that ultraviolet light causes.**

Hence, when you avoid the sun entirely, or slather on sun block whenever you go out, your skin is not making any vitamin D, and you're left without this built-in cancer protection. This is one of the primary reasons for the rise in melanoma. This in spite of the fact that most folks are following the widely publicized recommendations to avoid sun exposure and use sunscreen.

Vitamin D – the Master Key to Optimal Health

But it does more than just that. Vitamin D is different from other vitamins in that [it influences your entire body](#) -- receptors that respond to the vitamin have been found in almost every type of human cell, from your brain to your bones. This is why researchers are finding health benefits from vitamin D in virtually every area they look.

For example, optimizing your vitamin D levels can help you to prevent as many as [16 different types of cancer](#) including pancreatic, lung, breast, ovarian, prostate, and colon cancers. And vitamin D does not have just a slight impact on your cancer risk. It can [cut your risk by as much as 60 percent!](#)

However, it's not like turning a light switch. It's not a matter of having vitamin D or not – it's all a question of dose.

In order to reap the benefits you need to [make sure your levels are within therapeutic range.](#)

According to Dr. Heaney, your body requires 4,000 IU's daily just to maintain its current vitamin D level. In order to actually raise your levels, you'd have to increase either your exposure to sunshine, or supplement with oral vitamin D3 (which I do not recommend without getting your vitamin D levels tested regularly to make sure you're not reaching toxic levels).