

Does Sunscreen Affect Your Vitamin D Levels?

Megan Hoang

It's a question many people have asked: *If I use sunscreen every day, will it change my vitamin D levels?* This concern may lead some to skip sunscreen, especially if they are worried about vitamin D deficiency. Here's what you need to know.

How Vitamin D Is Made in the Skin

Your body produces vitamin D when your skin is exposed to ultraviolet (UV) rays from the sun. This process is important, as vitamin D helps support strong bones, immune health, and more. However, UV exposure is also the main cause of skin damage, premature aging, and skin cancer.

Does Sunscreen Block Vitamin D Production?

Sunscreens are designed to protect your skin by filtering UV rays, but they don't block them completely. Even when used perfectly and correctly, sunscreen allows some UV rays to penetrate your skin, anywhere from 2-7% of solar UVB, which is enough to produce vitamin D.

Sunscreen is not 100% effective—no sunscreen completely blocks all UV rays. This means you can still produce vitamin D while wearing sunscreen, though at a safer, reduced level of UV exposure.

What the Experts Say

Research consistently supports the idea that wearing sunscreen does not cause vitamin D deficiency in real-world conditions. Most people naturally get enough UV exposure during everyday activities, even with sunscreen on.

Why Sunscreen is Still Essential

The benefits of sunscreen far outweigh the risks of not wearing it. Unprotected UV exposure significantly increases your risk of skin cancer, the most common cancer in the United States. Sunscreen also helps prevent sunburn and premature aging, such as wrinkles and dark spots.

Other Ways to Support Your Vitamin D Levels

If you're concerned about vitamin D, remember that sunlight isn't the only source. You can also get vitamin D from:

- Your diet: Foods like fatty fish (salmon, mackerel, tuna), fortified dairy products, and eggs are rich in vitamin D.

- Supplements: If your doctor identifies a deficiency, they might recommend a vitamin D supplement to ensure you're meeting your needs.

The Bottom Line

Wearing sunscreen is an essential part of protecting your skin and your health. It won't block vitamin D production entirely, and most people can maintain healthy levels through diet and everyday sun exposure. If you're still worried, talk to your doctor—they can check your vitamin D levels and recommend the best plan for you.

References

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