

[<Back](#) | [Home](#) | [Basics](#) | [Departments](#) | [Get Involved](#) | [Site Map](#) | [What's New](#)



The Weston A. Price Foundation®  
for **Wise Traditions**  
IN FOOD, FARMING, AND THE HEALING ARTS  
Education • Research • Activism

[Home](#)>[Basics](#)>[Modern Diseases](#)>Sunlight & Melanoma



## Sunlight and Melanoma

### The Surprising Connection

By [William Campbell Douglass, MD](#)

Sunlight may be the best thing for melanoma. That's right, in spite of what you've been reading, the sun doesn't cause melanoma, in fact, it's actually good for you, as many studies have indicated.

Now two more studies are showing the benefits of the sun. Needless to say, this news has left scientists and dermatologists scratching their heads. After all, what else is there to do when what you've been preaching to the masses--that sunlight causes cancer and will kill you--ends up being flat out wrong?

Let me just give you a quick rundown on these articles--both of which appeared in the February issue of the *Journal of the National Cancer Institute (JNCI)*. One evaluated the hypothesis that UV radiation increases your risk of developing lymphoma. But after studying about 7,000 subjects, the researchers concluded that the opposite is actually true: increased sun exposure **reduces** the risk of non-Hodgkin's lymphoma.

The other study evaluated the supposed link between sun exposure and the chances of surviving melanoma. The researchers concluded that increased sun exposure actually increases the survival rate from melanoma.

So, what could be the cause of such phenomena?

### Misconception

Researchers Kathleen Egan, Jeffrey Sosman, and William Blot expressed their ideas about it in an accompanying editorial in the same issue of the *JNCI*. When they start out with a claim like this one: "Solar radiation is a well-established skin carcinogen, responsible for more cancers worldwide than any other single agent," it's no wonder they would scratch their heads over these latest findings.

And, of course, they're not alone. This misconception pervades the mainstream.

In an article published in the *London Telegraph*, Professor Jonathan Rees, a dermatologist at Newcastle University, said, "The facts of this are that ultraviolet light is the major known cause of skin cancer."

## Melanomas and Others

What Rees said may be technically true--the major known cause of skin cancer may well be ultraviolet light. But the type of skin cancer most of these writers are referring to is not melanoma, so the claim paints an inaccurate picture. It's important to make the distinction between melanoma and other skin cancers. Melanoma is a more serious form of skin cancer. It's malignant, and it can spread to your internal organs, often leading to death.

But 90 percent of skin cancers are non-melanoma cancers. The most common forms are basal and squamous cell carcinomas, which are much less serious. They're benign and are easily cured by simple outpatient surgery. These are the ones caused by solar radiation. Melanomas, on the other hand, are most likely caused by lack of sunlight and excess artificial light.

But dare I say there's hope for the mainstream? I don't want to be too hasty in jumping to conclusions, but the *JNCI* editorial did acknowledge two well-known--though rarely acknowledged--facts: that melanoma is usually found in areas of the body "where the sun don't shine" and that vitamin D may be important in preventing melanoma.

The authors said, "Evidence is beginning to emerge that sunlight exposure, particularly as it relates to vitamin D synthesized in the skin under the influence of solar radiation, might have a beneficial influence for certain cancers."

## Known for Years

You don't say.

It amazes me how something known for years, even in the halls of politically correct science, can be ignored by the medocracy until another study is done. Then, voila! It's big news all over again.

The scientific truth about sunlight and cancer is out there--it's just not easy for the average person (or the average doctor, for that matter) to find.

A close look at the *Atlas of Cancer Mortality in the U.S., 1950-1994* reveals the amazing truth about sunlight and cancer. Since you won't find this important document at your local newsstand, I'll explain it to you briefly. Among whites in the U.S., there is a striking difference in the number of cases of many types of cancer--breast, prostate, and colon, for example--between the northern latitudes and the southern latitudes. The higher the latitude in which you live, the more likely you are to die of cancer. In other words, New York bad, Birmingham good. And what's one of the major differences between New York and Birmingham? New York gets a whole lot less sunshine.

## Toss Your Sunscreen

What excessive sun exposure does do is cause injury to the inner layer of the skin, the dermis, which, in turn, leads to wrinkling of the outer layer, the epidermis. If you're thinking that that happens with age (regardless of the sun), you're right. But sun exposure can speed up the process, causing the skin to age prematurely and to become loose and leathery. This is called solar elastosis (SE).

When researchers at the University of New Mexico investigated melanoma, they found a marked **decrease** in the disease in patients with solar elastosis. (This information is from one of the *JNCI* articles I told you about.) In other words, more sun exposure equals less incidence of melanoma. And for those patients who did have melanoma, the subsequent mortality from the disease was approximately one-half as high among those patients with signs of SE. Now, I'm no logician, but it seems to me that if SE is caused by sun exposure and if people with SE have half as much melanoma as people with normal skin, then it's logical to conclude that sunlight prevents melanoma.

In light of these remarkable findings, shouldn't people seriously reconsider the effectiveness and logic of using "protective" sunscreens? What are they protecting you from, a long and healthy life?

Besides the research I mentioned above, I've told you before that the sun is a major source of vitamin D. Not having enough vitamin D can result in osteoporosis, autoimmune diseases, and rheumatoid arthritis, among other things. So when you slather on high-SPF sunscreens, not only are you increasing your risk of melanoma, you're also increasing your risk of developing all of the conditions that can arise from a vitamin D deficiency because you're literally blocking vitamin D synthesis in the skin.

There is a fierce resistance to this obvious fact by the sunscreen manufacturers and the dermatologists who have a reputation (and, in some cases, a sinecure) to protect. Both groups stress sunburn as an important factor in melanoma formation since that's all they have left as a reason to sell you sunscreen lotions. This is a very leaky boat in which to carry their message because (1) millions of people get sunburned every year but very few contract melanoma, and (2) if a melanoma appears, it's still most likely to appear in areas not exposed to the sun.

In the *London Telegraph* article I mentioned earlier, Jean King, the director of education for the Cancer Research Campaign, severely criticized researchers for defending sunbathing. She said, "There's a very clear and agreed public health message on this issue which we should be careful not to undermine."

Ah yes, an "agreed public health message"--the new paradigm of science that has no scientific justification. Sounds just like fat making you fat. Or fluoride being good for your teeth. But the fluoride paradigm looks like it could be shifting sooner than later.

### **About the Author**

William C. Douglass II, M.D. is editor of *The Douglass Report*. Reprinted with permission. Copyright 2006, Healthier News, LLC. All rights reserved. For more about The Douglass Report, go to [www.DouglassReport.com](http://www.DouglassReport.com).

---

This article appeared in [Wise Traditions in Food, Farming and the Healing Arts](#), the quarterly magazine of the Weston A. Price Foundation, [Fall 2006](#).

[Click here to become a member of the Foundation](#) and receive our quarterly journal, full of informative articles as well as sources of healthy food.

**Copyright Notice:** The material on this site is copyrighted by the Weston A. Price Foundation. Please contact the Foundation for permission if you wish to use the material for any purpose.

**Disclaimer:** The information published herein is not intended to be used as a substitute for appropriate care by a qualified health practitioner.

**The Weston A. Price Foundation**

PMB 106-380, 4200 Wisconsin Ave., NW, Washington DC 20016  
Phone: (202) 363-4394 | Fax: (202) 363-4396 | Web: [www.westonaprice.org](http://www.westonaprice.org)  
General Information/Membership/Brochures: [info@westonaprice.org](mailto:info@westonaprice.org)  
Local Chapters and Chapter Leaders: [chapters@westonaprice.org](mailto:chapters@westonaprice.org)  
Website: [webmaster@westonaprice.org](mailto:webmaster@westonaprice.org)

This page was posted on 18 DEC 2006.

---

[<Back](#) | [Home](#) | [Tour](#) | [Calendar](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Funding](#) | [Join Now](#)