Can Vitamin D Help Treat Sunburn?

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Every summer many people find themselves nursing a bad burn after basking in the sun's rays. Now, new findings published in the Journal of Investigative Dermatology suggest that high doses of vitamin D supplements may help reduce painful symptoms of overexposure to the sun within one hour, reports Medical News Today.

For the study, researchers at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland induced minor sunburn from an ultraviolet lamp in 20 participants to assess whether vitamin D could lessen the resultant skin inflammation. Scientists randomly divided the volunteers into four groups. One set received a placebo pill while individuals in the other groups were given vitamin D in three different dosages (50,000, 100,000 or 200,000 international units). Researchers then collected skin biopsies from each participant at 24, 48 and 72 hours and one week after their initial burn.

Results of the experiment showed that, unlike those on the placebo, folks who took the vitamin D supplement experienced a reduction in skin inflammation. In addition, researchers noted that, besides decreasing redness in the skin, the highest doses of the vitamin also activated skin repair genes.

Although these findings seem positive, researchers urged cautious optimism. "I would not recommend at this moment that people start taking vitamin D after sunburn based on this study alone," said Kurt Lu, MD, an assistant professor of dermatology at the university and the study's senior author. "But the results are promising and worthy of further study."

In the meantime, individuals should observe commonsense precautions when enjoying the sun. To help prevent sun exposure problems, wear broad spectrum sunscreen (SPF 15 or higher) and protective accessories and clothing, such as sunglasses and wide-brimmed hats when spending time outside.

Next, researchers plan to study whether vitamin D might help to treat burn patients.

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