Let the Sun Shine!

Soaking up the rays may benefit your blood pressure.

March 17, 2014 By Kate Ferguson

Nothing beats a bright, sunny day with golden sunshine kissing all it touches with comforting warmth. Although doctors say that a little sunlight is good—for example, it helps your body produce vitamin D—and that too much puts us at risk of skin cancer, recent findings suggest that the benefits of basking in the glow may outweigh this drawback.

For the study, researchers from the University of Edinburgh evaluated the blood pressure of 24 volunteers they seated under tanning lamps for two 20-minute sessions. One session exposed participants to ultraviolet (UV) light and heat from the lamps. The second exposed volunteers only to the heat but blocked their exposure to UV rays.

Scientists found that when sunlight touches our skin, it triggers a release of the compound nitric oxide into the blood vessels. The result? Lower blood pressure. (Heat-only exposure didn't alter participants' blood pressure.) "We suspect that the benefits to heart health of sunlight will outweigh the risk of skin cancer," says Richard Weller, MD, a senior lecturer in dermatology at the university.

Weller says these findings also explain why just popping vitamin D supplements alone can't replace the health benefits of absorbing those golden rays.

But, please, indulge responsibly.

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http://beta.docker.realhealthmag.com/article/sun-shine-pressure-25297-7139