

# Health Benefits of Sun

By B. Kay Sugg

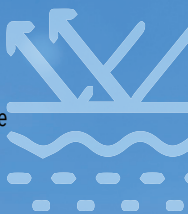
As we head into the summer months, many of us will be spending more time outside in the sun. While sun exposure should be taken in moderation to avoid getting burned, and the risk of skin cancer, a growing body of research has shown there are great health benefits to regular sun exposure in moderation. Translation: you should consider adding regular, moderate amounts of time in the sun year-round.

Research shows that sun exposure is linked with better health, less risk of many different diseases, and longer lifespan. A study from Sweden that followed approximately 30,000 women for several decades found that those women who received more sun exposure lived longer and with a lower risk of dying from all causes.

Although the best-known benefit of sun exposure in the body is the production of vitamin D, sunlight has many more health benefits to offer. Below are some of the beneficial effects of sunlight.

## PROTECTS THE SKIN

Sunlight stimulates the production of melanin, which darkens or tans the skin. Increasing skin pigmentation (short-term tanning) also thickens the outermost layer of skin and protects the skin and deeper tissues from UV damage.



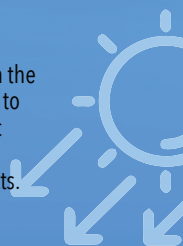
## WEIGHT LOSS

The system responsible for tanning (melanocortin system) when stimulated by sunlight is also closely tied to regulating appetite and body weight. There is very clear data which links regular sun exposure to decreased weight and weight loss.



## CANCER PREVENTION

Nitric oxide (secreted in response to UV exposure on the skin) benefits heart health by dilating blood vessels to increase blood flow and lower blood pressure. Nitric oxide also plays a key role in immunity, cellular function, and has antimicrobial and anticancer effects.



## BUILDS STRONG BONES

Vitamin D creation is sparked by the ultraviolet-B radiation in the sun's rays. This essential nutrient supports healthy bones along with managing the body's calcium levels.



## REDUCES STRESS

Sunlight promotes good mental health—creating a sense of well-being. Sunlight results in the production of serotonin and beta-endorphins which enhance mood, relieve pain, and promote relaxation. Some who experience very little sunlight (always working indoors) are at a higher risk of Seasonal Affective Disorder—known as major depression with seasonal pattern.



## BETTER SLEEP

Sunlight helps regulate your internal clock (circadian rhythm) by increasing melatonin levels at night—promoting sleep and time for your body to rejuvenate. (It has been shown that disruptions to the circadian rhythm increases the risk of heart disease, cancer, and metabolic syndrome.)





"Health Benefits of the Sun" continued.

### WHAT ABOUT SKIN CANCER?

The key is balance and moderation. Getting moderate amounts of sunlight and building up sun exposure gradually (without burning the skin) is important. Someone who ordinarily gets very little sun exposure (especially those with very pale skin) who perhaps goes on vacation and sits in the sun for hours—resulting in sunburn—has increased his or her risk of skin cancer greatly. Sunburn is caused by too much UVB radiation.

### DON'T VITAMIN D SUPPLEMENTS PROVIDE THE SAME BENEFITS?

In a nutshell: no. Multiple studies have shown that avoiding sunlight and taking only oral supplements of vitamin D has no effect on the risk of cardiovascular disease, hypertension, and metabolic syndrome.

### TIMING MATTERS

Target getting seven to ten minutes of sun exposure before 11:00 am or after 3 pm regularly. This small amount of sun exposure is enough to provide health benefits—especially when combined with exercise.



Sources:  
National Institutes of Health  
Grassroots Health Nutrient Research Institute  
Healthline.com

# Peach Ginger ICED TEA

Summer refreshment doesn't get any better than two of our favorites in one: peaches and iced tea! This one not only tastes great, but offers the health benefits of green tea. Moreover, it's naturally sweetened with fresh peaches and honey, with an added flavor boost from ginger. Check out this, and many more great recipes from Elaine at her blog, *Flavour and Savour* ([flavourandsavour.com](http://flavourandsavour.com)).

## INGREDIENTS

2 medium ripe peaches peeled and pitted (or you can substitute frozen peaches)  
4 cups steeped green tea (use loose green tea leaves or tea bags)  
1 - 2 tsp fresh ginger root, finely grated  
2 tbsp honey or maple syrup

TIME:  
10 mins

SERVINGS:  
6 cups

## INSTRUCTIONS

- Brew 4 cups of green tea, using tea leaves (or green tea bags). Start with one teaspoon for every 8 ounces of water (4 teaspoons for this recipe) and add more to taste. Brewing times for green tea range from 1 to 5 minutes depending on how strong you like it. The longer you steep it, the stronger the flavor. Taste as it steeps. If you leave it too long it will develop bitterness. Let it cool completely.
- Purée the peaches in a blender with finely grated ginger root and honey or other sweetener.
- Add the cooled green tea to the blender container and blend for a few seconds.
- Pour into a pitcher and chill in the fridge.
- When you're ready to serve, fill glasses with ice, add the peach ginger tea, and garnish with a few strawberries or raspberries (optional).



Recipe source: <https://www.flavourandsavour.com/peach-ginger-iced-tea/>