



## THE SUMMER SUN: FRIEND & FOE

**Question:** I heard we need vitamin D from the sun but also that the sun's rays are dangerous. What to do?

**Answer:** Humans have been living under the sun for thousands of years. It helps crops grow and provides light and much-needed vitamin D, so how can it be bad? At the same time, you probably know someone who has suffered from skin cancer, photosensitivity or a bad sunburn. Sunny days are one of July's great joys, but it's possible to get too much of a good thing.

The information we get from a plethora of media sources can send mixed messages. The makers of sunscreen, shade tents, anti-wrinkle creams and floppy hats warn you of the sun's harm, while beach-side resorts, travel agencies and makers of vitamin D supplements advise you of the health benefits of spending time in the sun. To figure out the right balance, try to avoid sensationalized reports and look to objective sources. Here is what we were able to find:

**FACT:** Vitamin D deficiency is linked to many serious health conditions, such as type 2 diabetes, cancer, bone and heart problems, and even dementia.

**FACT:** Much sun-avoidance messaging is about protecting your face. Great! Because according to the Center for Integrative Medicine, facial skin is not the best at absorbing UV light and converting a hormone in your skin to vitamin D. Exposing your arms and legs, or even your abdomen or back, twice weekly for 15 to 30 minutes is adequate. Sunblock your face and go outside in short sleeves.

**FACT:** The body converts vitamin D to vitamin D-3, which catalyzes a number of important disease-fighting metabolic processes.

**FACT:** Vitamin D is found in fatty fish (like salmon), egg yolks and fortified milk, but it is unlikely you would eat enough of these to get an adequate amount.

**FACT:** Supplements, in liquid or pill forms, are generally recommended if they are from a reputable provider. Before you start taking a supplement, check with a medical professional. A simple lab test can tell you the vitamin D level in your blood.

Sources: "Nutrition For Everyone: Vitamins and Minerals" at <http://www.cdc.gov/nutrition/everyone/basics/vitamins/index.html>. "Mayo Clinic's Stunning Vitamin D Research," Dr. David Edelberg, available at [www.wholehealthchicago.com](http://www.wholehealthchicago.com).

## JOKE OF THE MONTH

**How many telemarketers does it take to change a lightbulb? Only one, but she has to do it while you're eating dinner.**

—*A Prairie Home Companion Pretty Good Joke Book*

Laughter is known to boost the immune system, lower blood pressure, burn calories and release pleasure-inducing chemicals in the brain.

### Go Green!

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## SUMMER FOOTWEAR AND SENIOR SAFETY



When we think of summer, many of us think of sandals, flip-flops and walking around barefoot indoors and outdoors. However, for older folks, these seemingly carefree

footwear choices can spell danger, or even disaster. Falls in people over age 65 can lead to injuries and even death.

We have written in this newsletter many times about fall prevention and safety (December 2013, May 2013, August 2012). There are many contributors to falls in people over 65, including vision impairment, medication use, alcohol use and other balance factors. And your choice of shoes can make matters worse.

If you have ever had to undergo physical therapy for walking, your therapist certainly advised you to wear a closed shoe with a low heel and good tread for gripping the floor or sidewalk. Summer shoes offer none of these.

According to the CDC and the Veterans Healthcare Administration, bare feet are just as bad! As we get older, the sensory communication from our feet to our brain slows down, so even your own feet are not the safest thing to walk on. Similarly, slippers—that most comfy item at home—provide poor support, weak floor adhesion and little sensory guidance.

“Avoid going barefoot or wearing slippers,” advises the CDC fall prevention checklist. Other good shoe advice:

- A firm sole supports the foot
- Properly fitting shoes reduce falls
- Old, worn shoes should be replaced
- Walking shoes or athletic shoes are a safe bet
- Shoes that close securely and lace up or fasten around the foot are safer than slip-ons

Comfort and style are fine, and there are many online and storefront retailers that can help you measure your foot and find a shoe that fits your lifestyle and preferences. But please keep safety in mind. It’s good for your sole.

Sources: “Optimizing Footwear For Older People At Risk of Falls,” *Journal of Rehabilitation Research & Development*, Volume 45, Number 8, 2008. “Check for Safety: A Home Fall Prevention Checklist for Older Adults,” available at <http://www.cdc.gov/HomeandRecreationalSafety/Falls/CheckListForSafety.html>.

## NEW ADDITIONS TO THE MPPAF’S NATIONAL RESOURCE DIRECTORY

### **MobileHelp Mobile Medical Alert Systems, [www.mobilehelpnow.com](http://www.mobilehelpnow.com), (800) 800-1710**

MobileHelp sells personal emergency response systems that monitor subscribers in the home and away from the home. GPS and cellular technology enable their monitoring centers to establish two-way communication with their subscribers wherever there is AT&T coverage.

### **Lifeline Medical AutoAlert with Fall Technology, [www.lifelinesys.com](http://www.lifelinesys.com), (800) 380-3111**

Lifeline with AutoAlert is the first pendant-style help button with technology that can automatically call for help if it detects a fall and you’re unable to push the button yourself. It features the most widely adopted and proven fall-detection technology in the U.S. medical alert market today.



### QUOTE OF THE MONTH

“You can’t have a picnic lunch unless the party carrying the basket comes.”

—Will Rogers

To view our entire National Resource Directory, please visit [www.wrpioneers.org](http://www.wrpioneers.org).