

THE DEADLY EFFECTS OF SKIN COLOUR OBSESSION

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As a child growing up I spent entire summer vacations in the sun. In the swimming pool in the club or in the garden in my building it did not matter. I must have been one of the few girls in India who never heard the words – stay out of the sun! You'll get dark.

It's common knowledge that skin colour is an obsession in India. From the most outwardly broadminded to the most traditional of Indians, fair is beautiful, dark is not. Even watching an hour of Indian television will tell you that when you look at the numerous advertisements promoting fairness creams. The fairest of them all succeed in jobs, or get ahead in all aspects of life. Or take the matrimonial column in papers where the only requirement for a wife is – she should be fair!

Boy did I really luck out that growing up I didn't even know that I should stay out of the sun if I want to succeed in life, or if I want to get picked in a job interview. Had I known that magical truth, I probably would not have come back from every vacation 10 shades browner, healthier and invigorated every time! I may have slathered myself with chemicals and sunscreen and stayed out of the beach or the pool, or covered myself in a shawl all the time like I've seen some do! My hormones may have gone haywire and riddled me with various ailments that come about due to lack of sun exposure!

Which brings me to how unhealthy it is for us to avoid the sun. Without even going into the cultural ramifications, I want to talk about how unhealthy it is for our bodies!

Darker people ironically need the sun more than fairer people. Brown skinned Indians really require a lot sun for vitamin D to get produced and work it's magic. That's because melanin levels in darker people are higher which block the action of sunlight on vitamin D precursors in the skin, requiring much longer sunlight exposure to generate adequate circulating vitamin D compared to lighter skinned people.

This ingrained obsession with Indians not wanting to get darkened by the sun, coupled with major marketing efforts of beauty companies selling fairness products and sunscreens capitalizing on the weak spot, has resulted in [making 80% of us deficient in vitamin D](#).

Vitamin D is not a vitamin really. It's more like a hormone in your body, affecting a whole host of tissues, organs and hormonal functions.

What does it do?

- *It is essential for bone mineralization. Without Vitamin D, your body won't be able to do anything with calcium and magnesium the raw building blocks of bone.*
- *Improves insulin sensitivity and increases fat loss.*

- *Required for production of testosterone.*
- *Prevents tooth decay.*
- *Our immune systems need vitamin D to function.*
- *It reduced systematic inflammation.*
- *It plays a major role in the **protection against most cancers**. Research shows about [75% of all cancers](#) can be prevented with adequate consumption of vitamin D.*

[source](#)

So because of our obsession with preventing tanning by the sun we slather ourselves in sunscreen.

Sunscreen is thought to help prevent against skin cancer. Since it prevents against sunburn in fair skin, people believe it also prevents against skin cancer but surprisingly there is no research to back it up.

By slathering sunscreen, not only are we preventing vitamin D from being produced (thus increasing the risk of cancer) but also increasing our risk of cancer in another way as chemicals in sunscreen have been [linked to cancer](#).

In order to not get dark and avoid skin cancer (the potentially non life threatening cancer), we are losing all the benefits of vitamin D in our body as well as increasing our risk to the more dangerous types of cancer out there.

Firstly we are not getting enough sun, secondly the little bit of sun exposure we're getting, and we're slathered in dangerous chemicals.

Hmm! Could this be why skin cancer is on the rise: the use of sunscreen, the use of fairness creams, the emotional blackmail by marketing giants, and (surprise surprise), [our toxic diets](#)?

Think about it in evolutionary terms! We were evolved to be out in the sun! What's changed between now and then is not the holes in the ozone layer but our toxic diets full of hydrogenated vegetable oils, our chemical laden lotions, and our lack of sun exposure.

But of course, skin cancer (and all other cancer) rates are rising. So conventional wisdom will say,

use more and more sunscreen, stay out of the sun, and use a supplement for vitamin D. Because as usual, nature does not know any better. Pharmaceutical companies do.

Thanks for reading. Tell me, do you avoid the sun? Love your sunscreen? Let me know in the comments.

