

## **National Council on Skin Cancer Prevention Encourages Americans to Obtain Vitamin D through Diet and Supplements**

Washington, DC (July 14, 2009) – To help the general public better understand the relationship between vitamin D and the sun, the National Council on Skin Cancer Prevention has issued a position statement on vitamin D, sun protection and skin cancer prevention. The Council recommends that vitamin D be obtained from a combination of dietary sources and supplements and not through intentional exposure to ultraviolet (UV) radiation.

“For those who are concerned about vitamin D insufficiency, diet and vitamin D supplementation are the most appropriate methods to obtain adequate vitamin D – it is not appropriate to seek exposure to ultraviolet radiation,” says dermatologist Henry Lim, MD, FAAD, Council co-chair and chairman of dermatology at Henry Ford Hospital, Detroit, MI.

UV radiation, a known carcinogen, can cause a range of health problems, including skin cancer, cataracts, premature aging, and immune suppression. With more than one million skin cancers diagnosed annually, skin cancer is the most common form of cancer in the United States. Each year, there are more new cases of skin cancer than the combined number of new cases of breast, prostate, lung and colon cancer. While UVB radiation is one source of vitamin D, the benefits of exposure to UVB radiation cannot be separated from its harmful effects. For this reason, the safest way to obtain adequate vitamin D is through a combination of diet and vitamin D supplements.

According to the latest version of the U.S. Departments of Agriculture and Health and Human Services' *Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2005*, adults with limited sun exposure (e.g., the housebound population) should ingest extra vitamin D from vitamin D-fortified foods and/or supplements. For this group of individuals, an intake of 1000 international units (IUs) of vitamin D per day for adults is recommended. For children under 18 years of age, including infants, the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends 400 IU of vitamin D per day.

Because sufficient vitamin D can be acquired through diet and vitamin supplements, the Council recommends that adults and children practice comprehensive sun-protection behaviors and avoid intentional exposure to natural sunlight and artificial UV radiation (tanning beds) as a means to obtain vitamin D.

Practicing a comprehensive sun-protection regimen to avoid the risk of skin cancer is essential. The National Council's prevention guidelines include: seeking the shade between 10 am and 4 pm, generously applying sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of 15 or higher, and wearing sun-protective clothing, including wide brimmed hats and UV-protective sunglasses. For the full guidelines and the position statement,

visit [www.skincancerprevention.org](http://www.skincancerprevention.org) . For a list of vitamin D sources in a typical diet, visit the National Institutes of Health Office of Dietary Supplements website: <http://ods.od.nih.gov/factsheets/vitamind.asp>.

*The National Council on Skin Cancer Prevention is the united voice of 45 organizations, associations, and agencies dedicated to reducing skin cancer morbidity and mortality in the United States. The National Council members represent some of the nation's premier researchers, clinicians and advocates for melanoma and skin cancer prevention. To learn more about the National Council, visit: [www.skincancerprevention.org](http://www.skincancerprevention.org)*

# # #

Contact: John Antonishak, National Council on Skin Cancer Prevention 301/801-4422