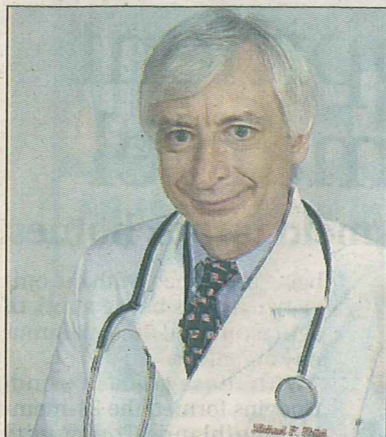


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Dermatologist Dr. Michael Holick says a lack of sun causes disease.

We need more sun, claims controversial dermatologist

Dr. Michael Holick was fired from his job as a dermatology professor — but he's not giving up his mission to educate the public about the sun's critical role in providing vital vitamin D.

A keynote speaker at this weekend's Canadian Diabetes Association conference in Vancouver, Holick can boast of 35 years of ground-breaking research in his field and a former professorship in physiology and biophysics at Boston University.

He can also boast of taking on the claim by mainstream science that the sun is seriously bad for your skin in all but short exposures.

To ward off potentially deadly skin cancers, the public has been told, means staying out of the sun completely — or wearing lots of clothes or sunscreen, the higher SPF the better.

Holick argues the contrary — which led to his firing in 2004. But he still believes vitamin D is not sufficiently produced in most people, and that it's difficult to obtain in necessary quantities through diet or supplement.

On Friday, after addressing an enthusiastic crowd of medical professionals, Holick said North Americans who "live north of Atlanta [Ga.] ... are at a 100-per-cent increased risk of multiple sclerosis" due to their lack of exposure to the sun. Colon, prostate and breast cancers and diabetes are also much higher in those with vitamin D deficiencies, he says.

His solution? A daily diet of fresh fish, fish oil, cod liver oil or at least 400 international units of vitamin D.

Newer-model UVB machines at tanning salons are safe — as long as you "wear a bathing suit and don't expose your face."

Sunscreens? "An SPF of 15 reduces the ability of the body to make vitamin D by 99 per cent," he says.

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