Adult & Child Health — School Based Services

TIPS TO TAKE CARE OF YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

BENEFITS OF SUNLIGHT ON MENTAL HEALTH

As the weather turns warmer and we get to enjoy more hours of sunlight throughout the day, it's important to understand the health benefits that sunlight can have on us. Many people suffer from Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) during the winter months, so the increased sunlight is often a welcomed sight for many of us. While it's important not to overexpose yourself to the sunlight, there are many benefits to your health that even just a little time in the sun can provide including:

- **Boost in the body's Vitamin D supply**—Vitamin D deficiencies have been linked to several health conditions including osteoporosis, loss of bone density, cognitive impairment in adults, increased risk of cardiovascular disease, and a bone disease called rickets

- **Melatonin production**—melatonin is a chemical hormone that plays an important role in countering infection, inflammation, cancer, autoimmunity, and helping our body's circadian rhythms
- **Serotonin production**—serotonin is another hormone which results in more positive moods and a calm and focused mental outlook
- **Increase in endorphins**—endorphins are our body's natural opiates which are linked to positive feelings and moods
- **Higher quality sleep**—melatonin helps lull your brain into slumber to help you get a more restful sleep at night
- **Lower blood pressure**—when sunlight hits your skin, your body releases nitric oxide into your blood which brings down blood pressure and improves heart health
- **Help treat some skin conditions** including psoriasis, eczema, jaundice, and acne

SUN SAFETY

While you're outside enjoying the sunlight and improving your mental health, it's important to remember that too much sun exposure can have negative impacts on our skin and bodies. Here are some ways to protect yourself while in the sun:

- **Shade**—sit under an umbrella, tree, or other shelter
- **Clothing**—when possible, it's recommended to wear long sleeves and long pants to help protect against UV rays
- **Hat**—wear a hat that has a brim all the way around it to shade your face, ears, and back of your neck to also protect against UV rays
- **Sunglasses**—helps protect your eyes and tender skin around your eyes from UV rays and sun exposure
- **Sunscreen**—blocks UVA and UVB rays which helps protect your skin

Get outside and safely enjoy the sun to boost your mental health!

Getting anywhere from 5 to 15 minutes of sunlight on your arms, hands, and face two to three times a week is enough to enjoy the vitamin D-boosting benefits of sun.

Sunlight cues special areas in the retina, which triggers the release of serotonin.

Sources:

- National Library of Medicine- https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2290997/
- Tri-City Medical Center- https://www.tricitymed.org/2018/08/5-ways-the-sun-impacts-your-mental-and-physical-health/#:~:text=Getting%20some%20sun%20increases%20your,in%20combination%20with%20other%20treatments
- Healthline- https://www.healthline.com/health/depression/benefits-sunlight#benefits
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention- https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/skin/basic_info/sun-safety.htm