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‘This certainly would go against any medical advice I would give’: Canadian doctors respond to Gwyneth Paltrow’s sun-exposure suggestion



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Actress Gwyneth Paltrow made an ill-advised comment about sun exposure to *British Cosmopolitan* recently. Canadian doctors disagree with her claims. [Evan Agostini/Invision/AP Files](#)

Gwyneth Paltrow isn’t a doctor — but it seems she occasionally pretends to be one in real life.

In the most recent issue of *British Cosmopolitan*, the 40-year-old star of *Iron Man 3* shared her thoughts on beauty and aging.

In an otherwise mundane and inoffensive interview, there is one particular quote that stands out from the rest:

“We’re human beings and the sun is the sun — how can it be bad for you? I think we should all get sun and fresh air. I don’t think anything that is natural can be bad for you — it’s really good to have at least 15 minutes of sun a day.”

Sorry, what?

We're not doctors here at the *National Post*, but we suspected there was something wrong with the *Goop* mogul's sun-worshipping suggestion. To back up our suspicions, we asked a few *real* doctors what they thought about Paltrow's comments.

Here's what they said:

Dr. Cheryl Rosen, Head, Division of Dermatology, Toronto Western Hospital:

This certainly would go against any medical advice I would give. The sun is the main cause of several kinds of skin cancer, one of which can be fatal — melanoma. There are safer ways to get vitamin D. Maybe take a pill.

In the summer, yes, we have to be outdoors, we have to enjoy our physical activity. But we have to protect ourselves as best we can. We have to wear sunscreen, hats, sunglasses. To reach young people, we shouldn't emphasize skin cancer, we should emphasize that the reason that people look old and wrinkled is the sun. If you look at the sun-protected skin, it doesn't look old and wrinkled, it looks fine. The sun damages our DNA, it's a carcinogen, and it makes you look old and wrinkled before your time.

Most people do get 15 minutes of inadvertent sun exposure, and the truth is, most people aren't listening to dermatologists. When we did a survey across Canada in 2006, it showed that a third of people are using sunscreen. So to legitimize it further and say, "15 minutes a day is great," is not the best way to go. Ms. Paltrow will not be winning any awards from the Canadian Dermatology Association any time soon.

And to say that everything that is natural can't be bad is very naive, especially when you look at all the poisonous substances — even poison ivy, to give an example. There so many examples like this. Is arsenic healthy? Is cocaine? Tobacco? These are natural things.

Dr. Peter Vignjevic, Medical and Cosmetic Dermatologist, Hamilton, Ontario:

Well there are other things that are "natural" also: Poison ivy is natural — I wouldn't want to have a "natural" moisturizer made out of that. Snake venom is natural — I still wouldn't want a cobra to bite me. Uranium is natural — I still wouldn't want my house built over a large uranium deposit. Tobacco is natural — I still don't think it's good to smoke. And so on and so on ...

Just because something is found in nature doesn't automatically make it good for you, so we still have to use common sense. By that token, we know that UVB and UVA are both known to cause skin cancer, so it makes sense to protect ourselves from it.

Dr. Ari Demirjian, Dermatologist, assistant professor at McGill University Health Center:

They are many natural things which are lethal to humans. The World Health Organization has classified UV rays as a human carcinogen. Recent statistics clearly show that younger individuals are more likely to get skin cancer over their lifetime given the changes in our environment, like the thinning of the ozone layer.

Dr. Richard Bendor-Samuel, Cosmetic Surgeon at The Landings Surgical Centre, Halifax:

In humans, the sun is required to convert cholesterol to vitamin D, which is necessary for good bone health. If one does not get enough sun exposure they should take a vitamin D supplement. Like most things in life, too much of anything is bad for us.

By now we should all know that the sun causes skin cancers, some of which are deadly. A little sun is a good thing. Enough sun to cause a sunburn is a very bad thing. Fifteen minutes a day of sunlight in the morning or late afternoon is likely okay for most of us.

Sorry, Gwyneth: [We'll just stick to your salad recipes.](#)

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