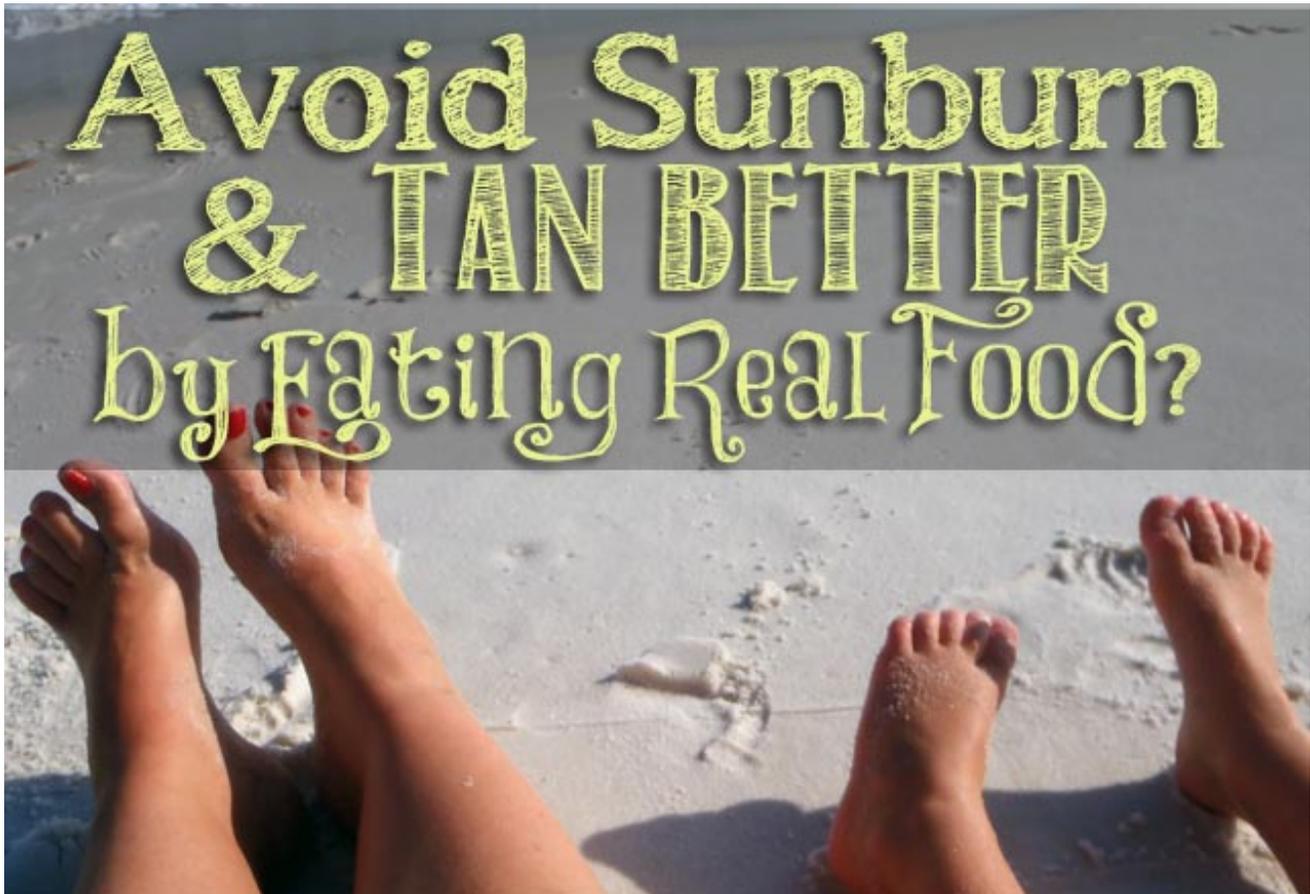


# Avoid Sunburn & Tan Better By Eating Real Food?

[wellnessmama.com/2619/avoid-sunburn-tan-better/](http://wellnessmama.com/2619/avoid-sunburn-tan-better/)



Here's a recent question I got from a reader about sun exposure while eating a healthy diet. Perhaps some of you can relate. Leslie asks:

*Since going grain free, sugar free, etc. and incorporating more healthy fats and vegetables about 6 months ago, I've noticed I have a higher tolerance to the sun. I not only don't burn, but I'm able to stay out in the sun longer without turning the tiniest bit pink and I tan more easily than I ever have before (which is saying something since I have red hair!). I was wondering if there is any science to this or if it is just in my head? Any thoughts?*

## Does Sunscreen Prevent Skin Cancer?

The general idea is that since sunscreen prevents sunburn, it also logically prevents skin cancer. While there might be some logic to this, there is not actually any science to back it up.

In fact, a study in the Journal of Clinical Pharmacology and Therapeutics reports that:

*Sunscreens protect against sunburn, but there is no evidence that they protect against basal cell carcinoma or melanoma. Problems lie in the behavior of individuals who use*

*sunscreens to stay out longer in the sun than they otherwise would. Vitamin D inhibition is, at this stage, unlikely due to insufficient use by individuals. Safety of sunscreens is a concern, and sunscreen companies have emotionally and inaccurately promoted the use of sunscreens.*

While it is certainly logical that avoiding sunburn is a good idea, [the question of if sunscreen is the best way to do so is certainly up for debate](#). We do know that sunscreen inhibits Vitamin D production, especially when used regularly and that [Vitamin D deficiency has been strongly linked to a variety of cancers](#), including the most dangerous types of breast and colon cancer.

So as a society, we avoid the sun, which helps our bodies naturally produce Vitamin D, and put chemical laden lotions on instead in hopes of reducing one type of cancer (skin) that is not commonly fatal. In the process, we make ourselves vitamin D deficient and increase our chance of a host of other cancers, including some of the most fatal cancers.

## Healthy Food Can Help!

Just as unhealthy food has a negative effect on skin and overall health, a real food diet can offer protection from various healthy problems, including sun related ones. Fortunately, the diet and lifestyle factors that help with skin health are probably already things you are doing, including:

### 1. Eating Enough Good Fats

To make sure your body has the proper building blocks for healthy skin and to reduce inflammation, make sure to get enough healthy saturated, monounsaturated and Omega-3 fats while avoiding polyunsaturated fatty acids and linoleic acid in Omega-6 vegetable oils.

### 2. Getting Enough Antioxidants

If you're [avoiding grains](#) and Omega-6 oils and eating proteins, fats and vegetables instead, you are probably great in the antioxidant department. Even real food "treats" like berries and dark chocolate are packed with antioxidants.

Antioxidants help reduce inflammation and free radicals (which you also won't have as much of if you're not eating grains, sugars, and omega-6 oils). Research has shown a strong protective effect of antioxidants against sunburn and skin damage.

### 3. Optimizing Vitamin D

This is a logical step in protecting the skin and many other parts of the body. Melanin, the dark pigment that we get when we tan, is produced to shield the skin from further UV exposure by providing a type of barrier. This is why dark skinned people need more sun than those with fair skin to get the same amount of Vitamin D. When the body has enough Vitamin D, it will start producing Melanin to keep from getting too much. There is evidence that optimizing Vitamin D levels through sun exposure and even through supplementation will help the body produce melanin faster and retain it longer.

[Research has shown that taking 5,000 to 10,000 IU of Vitamin D for several months can have a sunburn preventing effect and can improve the ability to tan.](#)

### 4. Getting Sun Exposure Gradually

While the sun is very beneficial because it helps our bodies produce Vitamin D, sunburn is certainly not beneficial. The easiest way to avoid sunburn naturally is to increase sun exposure gradually, while eating a healthy diet. For most people, 15-30 minutes is enough at first, though many can work up to several hours without a problem.

If your activity level requires you to be out for longer than this, wear protective clothing or find some shade!

## 5. Avoiding Chemicals and Using Natural Options

Since your body needs Vitamin D and there is no conclusive evidence that sunscreen protects against skin cancer, it is best to avoid using sunscreen, especially the chemical laden varieties.

If you have to be out in the sun for extended periods of time and can't seek shade, use a natural homemade sunscreen or plain coconut oil (which supposedly has a natural SPF of about 4).

At this point, I truly wonder what a healthy diet can't help! I was happy with the weigh loss, additional energy, clearer skin, better sleep, etc., but it even helps reduce sunburn and improve tanning!

## 6. Taking Some Supporting Supplements

About this time of year, I also start taking a specific regimen of supplements that help reduce inflammation and improve sun tolerance. The supplements I take are:

- **Vitamin D3** (I take about 5,000 IU/day)- **Emerging evidence** shows that optimizing blood levels of Vitamin D can have a protective effect against sunburn and skin cancer
- **Vitamin C** (I take about 2,000 mg/day)- A potent anti-inflammatory, and it is good for the immune system too.
- 1/4 cup **coconut oil** melted in a cup of herbal tea per day- the Medium Chain Fatty Acids and saturated fat are easily utilized by the body for new skin formation and are protective against burning
- **Fermented Cod Liver Oil/High Vitamin Butter Oil Blend** (also **great for remineralizing teeth**)- Probably the most important supplement for sun protection. I take double doses during the summer and the kids take it too. Since adding this and the coconut oil daily, none of us have burned. It's also great for digestive and oral health. (Amazon finally has **the capsules** back in stock)
- **Astaxanthin**- A highly potent antioxidant which **research shows** acts as an internal sunscreen. It's also supposedly an anti-aging supplement. I don't give this one to the kids though.

**What do you do about sun protection? Do you tan better by eating real food? Let me know below!**