
# 967: Sunlight Benefits: More Sunlight Will Solve (Almost) All Your Problems (Solo Episode)

Child: Welcome to my mommy's podcast!

Katie: This episode is brought to you by NativePath and in particular, something I have been experimenting with and really, really loving lately. And here's what you need to understand. A lot of us think calcium is important for our health, especially for our bones. But is this actually true? Bad news. It turns out maybe not, or at least there's more nuance here.

One of the largest bone health studies ever conducted followed thousands of women taking calcium and oral vitamin D daily, and the results were surprising, but not in the way you would think. They saw no significant reduction in their risk of fractures, and they saw no improved bone density. So all those calcium pills might not be doing what we think, and it turns out they might actually be counterproductive.

But here's where it gets interesting. A brand new study found that women who did one thing every morning consistently for six months gained 7% bone density, which is massive. This is the same amount of bone mass the average person loses over the course of five years after a certain age. So what did they do?

It was not a medication or even a workout. It came down to one simple thing added to their morning routine. And that's why a lot of people, especially people over 50, are making this one simple change and seeing massive results. I'm sure you're probably curious what it is, and it's a particular protein from one of my favorite brands called NativePath.

And they're offering all of you up to 45% off of this, plus free shipping and a free gift. Right now you can visit savewithnativepath.com/wellnessmama to find out what it is and how to implement it and save up to 45%. So again, that special site for 45% off is savewithnativepath.com/wellnessmama and see why people are adding this to the routine with amazing results.

This podcast is brought to you by LMNT, and this is a company you might've heard me talk about before, and I really love their products because proper hydration leads to better sleep. It sharpens focus, it improves energy, and so much more. But hydration is not about just drinking water because being optimally hydrated, a state called euhydration is about optimizing your body's fluid ratios. And this fluid balance depends on many factors, including the intake and excretion of electrolytes, which many people don't get the right amounts of. Electrolytes are charged minerals that conduct electricity to power your nervous system. I talk a lot about nervous system on this podcast.

They also regulate hydration status by balancing fluids inside and outside of our cells. LMNT was created with a science-backed electrolyte ratio of 100 milligrams of sodium, 200 milligrams of potassium, and 60 milligrams of magnesium with no sugar. Since electrolytes

are a key component of hydration, here's what happens when we get our electrolytes dialed in.

We have more steady energy, improved cognitive function, suffer fewer headaches and muscle cramps, we can perform better for longer, and especially the support fasting or low carb diet because when we stop eating carbs like during a fast, the absence of insulin allows the kidneys to release sodium.

So replacing that lost sodium with electrolytes can help you feel good on a fast. Since LMNT is zero sugar, it also doesn't break up fast. Electrolytes are also important for maintaining blood pressure, regulating digestion and proper fluid balance. Keeping skin hydrated, which is a big one that I feel like often gets missed and so much more.

I feel like proper electrolytes is a missing piece for a lot of people and I love LMNTs new canned drinks, which are sparkling water with all the same ratios and minerals I just talked about, and they are delicious. You can check it out and learn more at drinklmnt.com/wellnessmama . And at that link you will receive a free sample pack with any order.

Katie: Hello and welcome to the Wellness Mama podcast. I'm Katie from wellnessmama.com , and this episode is going to cover a topic that is near and dear to me. One that I have researched a lot and felt a tremendous difference from in my own life. And one that I feel like is still subject to a lot of misinformation that's floating around that can be conceivably very harmful when we believe this misinformation.

And that topic is the topic of sunlight. And I'm gonna delve into the benefits, the misconceptions, and what the data says about best practices. And I hope that by the end of this episode, you have a more complete picture of the many ways that the sun supports us, how to get those benefits in a healthy way, things to actually avoid and cautions to understand, and a lot more.

So let's jump in. We have been told for decades to avoid the sun to wear SPF, even if we go outside for just a couple of minutes, to spend more time indoors to cover up and to avoid too much sun exposure. We've been told that even a little bit of a tan is sun damage, skin damage, and aging, and so much more. But new data.

What if I told you that sunlight deficiency is actually considered now more dangerous than smoking? There's new published data that reveals that avoiding the sun, especially with certain caveats that I'm gonna get to in this episode, this actually can increase your risk of chronic disease even more than smoking every day.

We've been living in an indoor world with artificial lights. We are disconnected from the rhythms of nature, the things that have kept humans healthy for decades and generations, and we're paying the price. I've called this before Nature Deficit Disorder. I don't think light is the only factor by any means, but I do think it is one of the most important and not talked about enough.

We're seeing rising rates of poor sleep, of anxiety, of autoimmune issues, all kinds of mental health struggles, hormone imbalances and more. And I believe that natural light at least plays a part in all of these things. So today we're going to talk about how sunlight, which is real natural light from the sky, can help solve almost all of our problems.

I say that, it's a little hyperbolic, and also I'll make a strong case for just how connected natural light is to essentially every aspect of our lives. And I can say this with complete confidence because I have lived it. I've talked before, I am Irish, Scottish, German by nature. I grew up very fair skinned.

There was a time when I could only handle five minutes of sun without getting pink. I avoided the sun, wore sunscreen. I was low in vitamin D for years. And I didn't realize how much it was affecting everything from my sleep, to my mood, to my mental health. I was even taking oral vitamin D, which I now know does absolutely nothing to help me based on my genes.

It wasn't helpful at all. My levels stayed very low, and it wasn't until I figured out these pieces I'm gonna talk to you about today that I started seeing results in my energy and my vitamin D levels, and much more. Slowly I trained my skin back to health, reduced inflammation in my body, which was a big factor, rebuilt my tolerance.

And I started with small amounts of morning sun, which is the thing you're gonna hear me recommend throughout this episode. Starting with morning sunlight, which has a tremendous amount of benefits that I will get into, primes your skin for if you're going to get any other sun exposure throughout the day, and is so supportive in so many ways.

I also worked on my mineral levels, supported my mitochondria, reduced inflammation. And saw dramatic changes because now I can spend literally hours outside per day. I live in a very sunny area in Florida at the beach, and I can spend a couple of hours in the bright sun without burning.

My vitamin D levels are consistently in the eighties or nineties. They were 86 on my last test than I've gotten quite a bit more sun since then without any oral supplementation whatsoever. And this shift came about from smart, consistent sun exposure and getting my body back in sync with its natural light environment.

It wasn't about the vitamin D. That's a very small part of it. I think we do ourselves a disservice when we reduce the light conversation just to vitamin D. I now find I sleep better, I think more clearly, I'm happier. I feel that I feel the happy chemicals of sun exposure almost instantly now when I get sun exposure. I have more energy, less inflammation, as reflected by my labs as well, and my hormones are more balanced.

So today we are going deep on one of my favorite topics, which is sunlight, not just as a Vitamin D source. Like I said, I think it's a disservice when we reduce it to that, but as an electrical signal, amitochondrial booster, a circadian rhythm regulator, and a biological imperative. If you have been avoiding the sun, I hope this is the episode that changes everything, and I hope it will challenge some still pervasive misconceptions.

So first things first, let's dispel the myth. The sun is not just about vitamin D by any means. Sunlight, yes, is a mechanism by which our bodies do obtain vitamin D. It is so much more than that.

Vitamin D of course, is important. We will talk about that. Vitamin D levels being in the correct range correlates to better outcomes to everything from the common cold to cancer and reduced rates of nearly every chronic disease. It is important, but only focusing on vitamin D is like saying that the only reason to drink water is to hydrate your mouth.

Sunlight is information. It's so much more than just the cascade that creates vitamin D. It's an ancient biological signal that your body has evolved to respond to for a very, very long time. It doesn't just hit your skin and magically make vitamin D. It hits your eyes, it hits your mitochondria. It resets your internal clocks in a very important way.

It changes your hormones, your neurotransmitters, your immune system, your metabolism, even your blood sugar response. And here's the wild part, different wavelengths. Sorry about, excuse me. So here's the wild part. Different wavelengths of the sun do different things, and I feel like this part is not well understood.

There is red light and near infra red light in the early morning and late afternoon. So sunrise and sunset there's that red light effect. And that's the stuff that feeds your mitochondria and helps with cellular repair. It's also very low in UVA and UVB, so it's not gonna help you tan or get vitamin D.

It serves a completely different purpose. And is considered safe even for people who, for whatever reason, try to avoid bright sunlight. Then you have blue light and UV light in the middle of the day, which actually are very important. These help regulate your circadian rhythm. They help your body synthesize vitamin D, they help with nitric oxide production

and so much more. And it's actually the full range of light together that is a perfectly orchestrated symphony to support your health.

The problem is most of us are indoors under flickering LED lights most of the day with very limited wavelengths. We get blue light all day long, even at night when our body needs to know it's nighttime. We get barely any red or near infrared or UV light at all. So that's like eating a diet of only candy and wondering why we feel off.

If you have ever felt tired, wired, foggy, inflamed, or just off, i may not be your caffeine tolerance. It might not be your diet, it might not be your schedule. It might be your light exposure. So we're gonna dig into each of these light driven processes in a moment, but I want you to keep this in mind as we go. We've been told that sunlight is dangerous or optional, and I would argue it is not either of those things. It is absolutely foundational for human health.

So let's delve into the world of sunlight and mitochondria and why this is important. If you have ever felt like you're dragging by the middle of the day, even after a full night of sleep, this might help explain why. Let's talk about mitochondria. You've probably heard them called the powerhouse of the cell in a high school biology class, and that is true, but they are not just little engines.

They're also light sensitive photoreceptors, which means your body literally responds to the right light cues like sunlight by making more energy, especially red and near infrared light, which as I said, are abundant during sunrise and sunset, especially. These wave lengths penetrate deep into our tissues and activate an enzyme in our mitochondria called Cytochrome C Oxidase.

When this happens, it jumpstarts ATP production and ATP is the actual energy currency that our bodies run on. Think of this as like plugging ourselves into a cosmic charger. This is why we feel more alive after watching a sunrise or a sunset or spending time in that beautiful golden hour at night.

But it gets even better. These spectrums of near and infrared light, near infrared light, which we get from these certain times of sunlight in much bigger amounts than we can get from any red light panel. They also reduce inflammation, can be helpful for wound healing, improve blood flow, and so much more.

This is not anecdotal, this has been studied extensively and it is the basis of the red light therapy devices that you might have seen or even purchased. They're now popular all over Instagram. Those red light mask, the sun gives us new periphery free every single day in bigger amounts, in full frame spectrum, and you get the benefit of time in nature as well.

And this is the one of the reasons I started really prioritizing my natural light exposure morning and evening, even trying to get up for sunrise whenever possible, not just midday sun. When I added this piece in sunrise and sunset, and I started getting regular light from those spectrums on my skin and my eyes every day, I saw massive changes on my labs, in my hormones, in my energy, my mental clarity, and my skin tone.

And so it felt like my body had gone from running on fumes to running on sunlight, and literally that was what was happening because we are solar powered creatures, we just forgot about this. And that leads me into the hormone piece because there's a whole lot of talk right now about hormones. Cortisol is trending on social media. People are doing hormone cocktails to support proper cortisol levels, which I think in the right time, in the right dose can be very helpful. And there's more to the story here as well because sunlight is a big factor. In fact, this is for me, where things started to feel almost magical.

Sunlight doesn't just help our cells make energy. It also helps regulate our entire hormonal symphony. So I'll start with one of the most powerful ways this happens. Sunlight is the master switch. It sets your circadian rhythm, which controls the timing of not just your sleep and wakefulness, but literally every hormone in your body. When sunlight hits your eyes first thing in the morning without, important caveat, without sunscreen, without contacts, without windows in the way, it signals your brain to release cortisol.

Now cortisol gets a bad rap. You might be saying, wait, I don't want cortisol, but this kind of cortisol at this time of day, you actually do. You don't want no cortisol or too low of cortisol either. You want the right amount at the appropriate time of day. And this kind is triggered by sunlight, in the right dose, in the right range, at the right time when we do this part correctly.

So it's energizing. It wakes you up. You may find if you don't do this and you make this a regular habit, that you get more energy from this than from caffeine. This signals to your body it's daytime, time to get up, time to take action, let's go. Bonus if you, after getting this morning light, also signal safety to your body with a really nutritious breakfast that has enough protein as well within about an hour of waking up.

Then about 12 to 14 hours later, that same light signal that you started at sunrise now flips the switch to start creating melatonin, which is the sleep hormone. So no supplement needed. Your body makes this perfectly, naturally when it's given the right cues. So no supplement needed. Your body starts producing melatonin in the evening if it got the right dose of light earlier in the day, and this is missing for a lot of us.

Also, melatonin is often thought of as just a sleep hormone, but it is so much more than that. It is a really powerful antioxidant. It helps with cellular repair and it plays a role in fertility, immunity, and detoxification. That is also just the beginning of the hormone cascade.

Sunlight directly boosts serotonin, which is the feel good neurotransmitter. If you've ever had that feeling of almost bliss or just like a burst of happiness after being outside on a beautiful day, this is why it's not placebo. It is serotonin synthesis in action. Serotonin means better mood, better digestion, and better emotional regulation and better sleep because serotonin is actually the precursor to melatonin.

And for any fellow hormone nerds out there, here's an interesting fact as well. Sunlight exposure, especially to the chest and the genitals in men, can boost testosterone production. There are actually studies that show that men who exposed, um, their torso and their testes to sunlight had significantly, significantly higher testosterone levels than men who didn't, and women get this benefit as well.

Light on the skin impacts estrogen and progesterone. Via the hypothalamus pituitary gonadal axis. So put simply, sunlight is one of the most powerful hormone balancing tools we have, and it's free at the very least. I think this is something to build into your life foundationally before you try any kind of hormone therapy or even supplements, because it's going to make all of those things much more effective.

When I started optimizing my light exposure. I didn't just start sleeping better. I saw changes in my hormones, my cycle, my energy, even my metabolism and all of that happened without any kind of crazy protocols or supplements. I do think there's a time and a place for those. I'm not saying there's not, I just think that getting back in rhythm with natural light cues is a vital part of this as well.

And if you are a woman, especially if you are cycling every month, if you're pregnant, postpartum, or perimenopausal, these benefits can compound. Because sunlight doesn't just work on our hormones indirectly, it actually regulates the hypothalamus, which is the master controller of the endocrine system.

So when your hypothalamus gets consistent natural light, it does a better job of managing your ovarian, adrenal and thyroid function. Speaking of thyroid, the sun plays an important role here as well. Your thyroid is incredibly sensitive to circadian signaling and mitochondrial health, both of which are supported by daily sun exposure.

Red and the infrared light in particular, like I said, can signal ATP production and thyroid cells and help reduce inflammation. There's even some evidence that photobiomodulation

to the neck area may support thyroid healing in conditions like Hashimoto's. And while I personally still love supporting the thyroid with nutrients like selenium and iodine in small doses as well, sunlight I think is one of the foundational tools here for keeping the thyroid strong.

I also wanna briefly touch on pregnancy. There's often a fear-based narrative around sunlight during pregnancy of especially avoiding heat, avoiding overheating, staying inside, et cetera. And of course, while we want to, while during pregnancy, avoid burning or overheating, of course, pregnancy actually increases our need for sunlight, not lessens it.

And like I said, sunlight supports vitamin D production, which is essential for fetal development. It's actually a massive factor that we're finding out more and more really is correlated to better pregnancy outcomes across the board. It helps immune function and even reduced risk of complications like preeclampsia and gestational diabetes.

Sunlight also helps with mood regulation and they're finding there may be a positive effect here encountering prenatal and postpartum anxiety and depression. Also, it is helpful and vital for calcium metabolism and bone formation for both mom and baby and even in birth timing. Some research, this is fascinating, found that sunlight exposure in the third trimester is associated with healthier birth weights and more optimal birth timing.

So whether you're trying to support your thyroid, balance, your hormones, or you are growing a tiny human, sunlight is one of the most foundational tools we can use. There's also a big mental effect here. And I think sunlight is an overlooked, massively impactful tool when it comes to mental health.

Sunlight is perhaps one of the fastest, most effective ways to shift your mood. In fact, studies show that morning sunlight exposure can be as effective as antidepressants for some people with seasonal affective disorder. And I've personally and anecdotally felt this strongly when I visited countries that get almost no light at all in the winter, and I notice a difference in how I felt, my mental health, even within this span of one week.

And I noticed this too, if I don't get enough light, even throughout the course of a week, I will start to feel a difference. And why is this? It's because light, especially bright, full spectrum light activates your body's production of serotonin, like I said, which is the neurotransmitter responsible for happiness, contentment, and emotional stability.

Serotonin is also the building block for melatonin, like I said. So when you get enough natural light during the day. You are not just setting yourself up to feel better during the day, but to sleep better, which leads to more resilience the next day as well. And sunlight increases BDNF, which is brain derived neurotropic factor.

And you can think of BDNF as miracle grow for your brain. It supports, there's a lot of emerging evidence on this, it supports neuroplasticity, improves learning outcomes, memory, and protects against cognitive decline. And it's also, as you guessed, triggered by natural light exposure, especially in the morning hours, as well as certain dietary strategies that I'll cover in a different episode.

There's even research showing that regular sunlight exposure reduces the risk of depression, anxiety, bipolar episodes, Alzheimer's, and ADHD symptoms. And to me, this makes complete sense because we weren't designed to spend our days inside, disconnected from the rhythms of nature, staring into flickering blue light rectangles like many of us are doing, and like I'm doing right now as I record this. I talked before about Nature deficit disorder, and I think that light is a big piece of this.

When we are chronically light deprived, we don't just get tired, we get sad, we get reactive, we get overwhelmed, we get disconnected. And when we reconnect to light in the right way, we literally light up again. Personally, I've noticed that my best days where I feel the most calm, grounded, and joyful, almost always start with morning sunlight and natural light exposure throughout the day.

And for any moms listening, this works for kids too, including babies. If our kids are struggling with focus or mood swings or sleep, one of the most powerful things we can do is help get their light cues back on track.

Now I wanna talk about circadian rhythm reset. So let's zoom out for a second and look at the big picture. Your body is home directly to 37 trillion cells, and almost every single one of them runs on a 24 hour biological rhythm, which is your circadian rhythm. This governs everything from when you wake and sleep to when and how your body repairs itself to when hormones are released, when your gut digests, when your brain is most creative, and when you're ready to wind down.

And guess what one of the biggest influencers of circadian rhythm is? You guessed it. Light exposure. More specifically, the bright light cues at the right time of day, including sunlight, hitting your skin and your eyeballs first thing in the morning, some amount of midday sun, and ideally sunset exposure as well.

This is because your eyes contain (this is so fascinating to me) your eyes contain special non-visual photoreceptors. These are called intrinsically photo sensitive retinal ganglion cells, a fun science term, that detect blue light. When these receptors sense bright, natural light early in the day, they send a signal to a part of your brain called the suprachiasmatic nucleus, which is your central circadian clock.

This clock then signals every system in your body. It's telling them, Hey, it's morning time to make cortisol, rev up the metabolism, get digestion going, start the clock for melatonin production tonight. So this one signal triggers everything else downstream. But here's the thing, the signal only works with real light.

Indoor light doesn't cut it. Screens don't cut it. Even standing near a window doesn't cut it because that's only about one 50th of the lux of being outside, even on a cloudy day. And when we miss that early sunlight, our circadian rhythm can get very disrupted. Our melatonin release can be delayed. We feel tired at the wrong times.

We feel wired at night. If you've ever gotten this second wind at 11 o'clock at night, this could be why. Our digestion gets sluggish. We might crave carbs or caffeine to stay awake throughout the day. Hormones can become unpredictable and sleep quality can suffer. If this sounds familiar, I've seen it over and over in myself and other people.

When you fix your light environment, so many other things fall into place. So again, this truly is free and simple. Its within 30 minutes of waking up, stepping outside without sunglasses, no contacts, if you can help it, just 10 to 15 minutes of unfiltered light on your skin and your eyes. This does not mean of course, staring directly at the sun at all.

It just means that you need to be outside without anything between your eyes and nature. Even better if you can combine this with movement or grounding or hydration as well. But if you can just experiment with this you might be amazed how different you feel in a couple weeks of watching the sunrise and getting that natural light exposure.

I honestly believe that this is one of the most underrated wellness tools we have. It all starts with the sun, and it's free for all of us. And now I wanna shift gears a little bit and talk about biometric benefits and the light code. This gets a little bit more into the physics realm, but I think this is so fascinating.

So we've talked about how sunlight supports hormones, mood, circadian rhythm, and energy production. But I wanna go even deeper because the body is not just biochemical or biological, it's also electrical. I've talked about this before. There's a fascinating book called The Body Electric that really delves into this.

But every cell in your body has a voltage. Every organ has its own frequency. You are at your core, a bioelectric being actually a bioelectric, electromagnetic being, if you wanna be really precise. And guess what charges this system?  Light, especially the full spectrum range of light red, near infrared, ultraviolet, and natural sunlight spectrums.

When those wavelengths hit our skin and our cells, they don't just trigger biological reactions. They quite literally restore our cellular charge. Here's how. Sunlight helps to

structure and make coherent the water inside our cells. This is sometimes referred to as easy water or exclusion zone water.

And this was researched extensively by Dr. Gerald Pollock. Essentially it acts like a living battery and sunlight, especially the infrared spectrum of sunlight charges that battery. So think of it like this. If you wanna simplify the cascade here: your mitochondria use red and infrared light to make ATP. Your cells use that same light to charge up your water-based voltage systems, your nervous system muscles, and even your heart rely on that electrical flow to function properly. And when we don't get this, we are quite literally not supporting the electrical capacity of our body as much as we could. Without sunlight, the system starts to short circuit.

We might not feel sick in the traditional sense. We might feel dull or drained, inflamed, tired, foggy, or disconnected. It's also not just about internal voltage, it's also about how the body communicates. Cells actually use light signals to talk to each other.

In fact, some scientists believe that bio photon communication, which is the omission of tiny particles of light from our cells, may be one of the primary ways our body coordinates healing and regeneration. So when you step into the sun, you're not just getting warm, you're literally getting a frequency field that your body recognizes, receives, and responds to in a myriad of ways.

It's like charging a crystal or syncing your internal wifi to the earth's signal. And I know that can sound a little woo. This is actually like strongly rooted in physics and no LED screen, pill, or supplement can fully replicate this effect. Essentially, sunlight carries electromagnetic codes that your body was designed to read.

And the more we receive these and the more consistently, the more our system comes back online. I also wanna talk about immune system and inflammation because I feel like this is a big component for a lot of people. As I said at the beginning of this episode, avoiding sunlight might be increasing your risk of chronic disease more than almost anything else that you're doing.

I know that sounds dramatic, but let's break it down. We have been told for decades to avoid the sun, to reduce our risk of skin cancer, and yes, burning is harmful. No question, and I'm not by any means recommending anybody get a sunburn ever. But regular, healthy, non-burning sunlight exposure is actually protective, not just for the skin, but for our whole body.

And there is data to back this up. In fact, recent analysis of available data found no correlation between sun exposure and increased skin cancer risk, just between sunburn

and skin cancer risk. Okay, so again, from the available data, there's not a correlation between healthy sun exposure and skin cancer only between sunburn, true skin damage and skin cancer.

And there's also strong data that having correct vitamin D levels and potentially these other benefits from the sun reduce the risk of other types of cancer. So this is why I personally, again, this is entirely just my opinion, none of this is medical advice in the slightest, but this is why I personally feel sunlight is exponentially worth the time and worth.

I don't even feel that there are risks to healthy sun exposure, but that the benefits far, far exceed any potential risk. So let's talk about inflammation. Chronic inflammation is linked to almost every type of modern chronic disease. It's talked about often on this podcast by many guests. And is linked to or correlated with things like autoimmunity, cardiovascular disease, metabolic dysfunction, neurodegeneration, and even certain types of cancers.

And sunlight is one of the most powerful free anti-inflammatory tools we have. Here's why. UV light, the time we get midday, stimulates the production of nitric oxide, which helps lower blood pressure, improve circulation and reduce systemic inflammation. Red and near infrared light, reduce oxidative stress and mitochondrial dysfunction, which are major drivers of chronic inflammation.

Sunlight also modulates T regulatory cells, which are the peacekeepers in our immune system, helping calm our overactive immune response, which is correlated here with autoimmune conditions. And I feel like this was personally helpful for me. And then while I didn't wanna talk about it early on in this episode, let's touch on vitamin D.

It's technically a hormone, not a vitamin. It plays a massive role in immune system regulation, calcium metabolism, gene expression and even mental health. But here's what most people miss. Vitamin D from sunlight is different than from a pill. When you make it from sunlight exposure through your skin, you also get cholesterol sulfate, which is important for cardiovascular and cellular health.

You get balanced vitamin D metabolites, not just vitamin D storage, but the active forms that are also very important. And you get liked triggered co-factors like nitric oxide, serotonin, and melatonin synthesis. So it's a full symphony and popping a vitamin D pill does not replicate the whole song, just a single note.

So here's a kicker. Now, I mentioned this in the beginning. A large scale study out of Sweden found that women who avoided the sun had a similar life expectancy to smokers, which is where that statistic comes from. So in other words, not getting sunlight might be as risky as smoking a pack a day, which turns on its head what we've often been told about

sun exposure for the past few decades. Let that sink in. Fom the data we have available, sunlight deficiency has been linked to higher rates of heart disease, type two diabetes, depression, Alzheimer's, multiple sclerosis, and certain types of cancer, including potentially breast and colon cancer.

And yet we are still telling people to avoid the sun. So I personally feel it is time to flip the script because the danger is not sunlight exposure, it's sunlight deficiency. And now that we've covered how essential sunlight is for our biology, I also wanna briefly touch on modern habits that block or distort these vital signals because this is where a lot of us and myself included for a long time get tripped up.

So a big one and something I personally will not use for the reasons I'm gonna explain is sunscreen. I am not totally anti-sunscreen. I'm certainly not recommending anybody else do or do not use sunscreen. I'm saying I personally don't use it for several reasons. I'm certainly anti regular, mindless sunscreen use or using sunscreen when we're getting moderate sun exposure or early, like sunrise, sunset, sun exposure when there's no risk of burning anyway.

Here's what most people don't realize. Most conventional sunscreens block UVB, which is what we need for vitamin D production, but allow some parts of UVA, which penetrates deeper into the skin and is more associated with aging and DNA damage. Many of them contain endocrine disrupting chemicals like oxybenzone, avobenzone, or octinoxate, which can mimic estrogen and interfere with hormones, which is especially problematic in children.

And when combined with sunlight, some of these compounds can actually create free radicals damaging the skin more than protecting it. So, yes, sunburn is bad. Blocking all sun exposure all the time with chemical sunscreen that contain endocrine disruptors is also bad. So a better approach, what I do at least, I build a solar catalyst slowly, starting with short, regular sun exposure as soon as I can early in the spring.

I use mineral based sunscreen, almost never. But if I needed to, if I was gonna be, for instance, scuba diving and couldn't cover up or something for the whole day, I would use that. I much prefer if I'm going to be outside all day to just use clothing and shade instead of sunscreen of any kind.

And another factor here that I love to debunk and talk about is sunglasses. I wore them consistently for years 'cause yes, they make it easier to stay in the sun and they look cute. I would especially wear them in the car or if it was bright out, but here's what I didn't know at the time. Our eyes are one of the most important sensors in our body.

I talked about the special photoreceptors in our eyes. When we wear sunglasses, especially in the morning or when we're getting bright sunlight, we are blocking the very signal that sets our circadian rhythm. We are also blocking something that is signaling to our skin that we are in the sun and need to make melanin, which is part of that natural process.

So essentially, we increase our risk of sunburn by wearing sunglasses. Also, we block this light getting through the eyes, which we, as I explained, regulates cortisol and melatonin. It tells our brain when to be alert versus when to rest. It impacts our neurotransmitter production, especially serotonin. So if we're always wearing sunglasses, our body may never get the memo that it's daytime, at least correctly.

We might not get that full spectrum of sunlight. So obviously if we are skiing or in direct glare, that's an important time to protect our eyes for sure. But everyday sun exposure, especially morning sun exposure. Try skipping sunglasses and see what happens. Another quick caveat, let's talk about windows.

This one surprised me. You can sit by a sunny window. You can feel the warmth in the sun. Many modern windows, block UVB. So you're not getting vitamin D. You're still getting UVA, which is more tied to aging and skin damage. And this filtered light can increase free radical damage because you're getting incomplete wavelengths of light.

So ideally get sunlight outside, not through a window. And lastly, I wanna briefly touch on artificial lighting because many of us are getting much more exposure to artificial indoor light than natural light. And most indoor light now comes from sources like LEDs and fluorescence or from screens, which emit high amounts of blue light, very little or no red or infrared, no UV whatsoever, and they often flicker at a rate that your eyes can't see, but your brain can register.

So this creates its own kind of biological stress. Your body essentially thinks it's midday. It registers stress from the flicker that you don't even, or you're not even aware of. And so this can lead to us being more anxious and overstimulated and to sleep issues.

If you want to buffer this, this is what I do. Get sunlight first thing in the morning. Get bright midday sunlight when you can go see the sunset as well. Use red or amber bulbs in the evening to support melatonin after sunset. I will link in the show notes to some resources of what I personally use. You can install things like flux or night shift on phones and screens at night, or use blue light blocking glasses after sunset.

And whenever possible, which I hope for all of us is every day go outside, even if it's cloudy, even if it's raining, getting indirect, cloudy, outdoor light is better than the best indoor

lighting. So trying to get as much natural light as possible safely. So, in summary and action stuff. Let's bring this full circle.

We have been told for decades that sunlight is dangerous, but in my opinion, the real danger is living in a light starved body in a disconnected world that is artificially lit with light that our body doesn't understand. Sunlight is not just about vitamin D, that is one tiny part. It is also about mitochondrial and ATP production.

About hormone regulation from cortisol to melatonin to serotonin to testosterone. It is about mental health, mood, and emotional stability. It is about circadian rhythm and setting our body's internal clock. It is about immune function, inflammation reduction, and yes, even energetic like energy within ourselves, like the voltage of our body.

In my opinion, sunlight is a biological necessity. It's an energetic tuning fork and a form of communication that our body knows how to read. And when we stop fearing it and start using it wisely, it is dramatic what we can feel. So, key takeaways, simple things, if you wanna start, the first three things I would recommend to try today:

Get morning sunlight within 30 minutes of waking up. Super simple. Nothing fancy needed. Just step outside. No sunglasses, no window between you and the light. Just get 10 to 15 minutes on your skin and your eyeballs as soon as possible after waking up. This will help your hormones, boost your mood, and start that internal clock for melatonin production at night.

Number two, expose your skin safely to midday sun. If you are sun sensitive, be very careful. Start very slowly, build a solar callus slowly over time. Aim for very short, non burning sun exposure to get the benefits of those things I talked about. Not just vitamin D, but nitric oxide and cellular charge as well.

There's an app called D as in vitamin D, D minder, that lets you calculate how much sun you need for vitamin D production for your skin type and the area where you live. And then lastly, number three, ditch artificial light at night. My tip would be after sunset, switch to amber or red lights. Wear blue light blocking glasses and avoid bright overhead LEDs.

Bonus points if you want to use candlelight, stargazing, or go really low, low light at night. So bonus quick tips. Combine sunlight with movement or grounding for amplified benefits. Move your morning tea, breakfast, journaling, meditation outdoors. Let your kids get sun too, it helps with so much. And especially if you have hormonal challenges or you're pregnant or postpostpartum, prioritize gentle light in the morning.

This will actually help support hormone balance, milk production for breastfeeding moms, and emotional resilience. The good news is you do not have to overhaul your life. You just

have to step outside and let your body remember how to thrive. Sunlight won't solve everything, but it might solve a lot more than you think.

And I would love to hear your feedback, how you incorporate light, or if you fully disagree with me, I would love to hear that too. Please always feel free to leave a comment or if you are willing, I am honored when you leave an honest rating or review because that helps other people find this podcast as well.

And as always, thank you so much for listening, for sharing your valuable time, energy, and attention with me. I'm so grateful, I don't take that lightly. Thank you for being here, and I hope you'll join me again on the next episode of the Wellness Mama Podcast.