

Press release immediate

Gwyneth enjoys the sun

Gwyneth Paltrow has been enjoying a new lifestyle since doctors diagnosed a bone problem and told her “to spend a little time in the sun”. The 37 year old actress put her health at risk by avoiding the sun and eating severe macrobiotic diets.

Miss Paltrow, who won the Best Actress Oscar for her role in Shakespeare in Love, developed a severe tibial plateau fracture and a bone scan showed she was suffering from osteopenia.

“This led my western/eastern doctors in New York to test my vitamin D levels,” Miss Paltrow said in her newsletter GOOP. “They turned out to be the lowest they had ever seen, not a good thing. I went on a prescription strength level of vitamin D and was told to...spend a bit of time in the sun.”

Osteopenia, the thinning of bone, leads on to osteoporosis with collapse of vertebrae and ultimately the “widow’s stoop”. The cause is generally insufficient vitamin D. A clinical trial conducted in naval recruits in the United States has shown that stress fractures, similar to that suffered by Miss Paltrow, may be prevented by taking vitamin D.

Miss Paltrow says that the new advice from doctors left her confused as she had always been told to stay out of the sun. “I was curious if this was safe, having been told for years to stay away from its dangerous rays, not to mention a tad bit confused.”

Insufficient sunshine and vitamin D are now known to be a risk factor for cancer, heart disease, diabetes, multiple sclerosis, and many other immune system diseases including arthritis. Vitamin D has also been found to be crucial for optimal muscle activity. The EU now allows a health claim referring to benefit of vitamin D for muscles and the immune system. Many top UK athletes now regularly take a vitamin D supplement.

“Many people have put their health at risk by avoiding the sun, wearing suncream continuously, or using cosmetics containing sunblock,” says Oliver Gillie, campaigning health writer and director of Health Research Forum. “The cost of diseases caused by insufficient vitamin D come to £27 billion annually in the UK compared with just £6 billion for diseases caused by smoking.”

“People who work outdoors get less melanoma, the worst form of skin cancer, than people who work indoors. For best health sunbathe carefully wearing as few clothes as possible as often as you can, but take care not to burn,” said Oliver Gillie.

Miss Paltrow has survived for long periods on a macrobiotic diet containing no meat, eggs or dairy products. Meat and eggs provide a useful amount of vitamin D, but only enough to prevent extreme deficiency. Milk in the United States is fortified with vitamin D and so also provides some useful vitamin. UK milk is not fortified. It is not possible to get more than 10 per cent of the optimal amount of vitamin D from the diet.

Continuous wearing of suncream blocks UVB rays preventing them from reaching the skin where they make vitamin D. However most suncreams fail to block UVA, the part of the UV spectrum believed to cause melanoma, the most serious form of skin cancer. “Start by sunbathing without suncream to get your vitamin D and when you’ve had enough it is best to put on some clothes and a hat or move into the shade,” said Oliver Gillie.

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