Basking in early morning sunlight can help regulate BMI

A study from Northwestern University reports that the timing, intensity and duration of light exposure during the day are linked to body weight.

New Delhi, Feb 25, 2017: People who have ample daily exposure to even moderately bright light in the morning have a significantly lower body mass index than those who have little exposure to the morning sun. The study also found that the earlier this light exposure occurred during the day, the lower the individual’s BMI.

Moreover, the influence of light exposure on body weight was a variable independent of an individual’s physical activity level, caloric intake, sleep timing, age or season.

Padma Shri Awardee Dr K K Aggarwal, National President Indian Medical Association (IMA) and President Heart Care Foundation of India (HCFI) and Dr RN Tandon – Honorary Secretary General IMA in a joint statement said that “Light helps synchronize the body’s internal clock which is basically your internal sleep clock, and it has control over your body’s energy systems. She said that lack of light exposure at the right time of the day disrupts the body’s circadian rhythm which can result in weight gain due to a slowing down of your metabolism and affect hormonal homeostasis. It is recommended to bask in bright light preferably from eight in the morning to noon. She also said that 20 to 30 minutes of exposure to the morning sun is already enough to make an impact on a person’s BMI.”

“Sunlight is also beneficial in the context of lifestyle disorders. Melatonin released during natural morning sunlight hours can regulate the circulatory system and balance breathing. The timing of sun exposure is also crucial, exposure to bright light in either the morning or evening increased insulin resistance when compared to exposure to dim light. Insulin resistance is the body’s inability to move glucose out of the bloodstream, which can result in a build-up of blood sugar. This build-up can eventually cause not only an increase in weight and body fat but also an increased risk of diabetes.” added Dr K K Aggarwal.

Following are some tips for ample sunlight exposure:
1. Treat sunlight as therapy, using the lowest dose necessary, but don’t avoid it completely.
2. Get 15-30 minutes of unprotected morning sun exposure two to four times a week.
3. Boost your “internal sunscreen” by consuming anti-oxidants and beneficial fats.
4. Have your vitamin D blood levels checked regularly. This is particularly important for women undergoing reproductive changes.
5. Always wear a sunscreen with at least Sun protection factor of 15 or above.

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About IMA: Indian Medical Association is the only representative, national voluntary organization of Doctors of Modern Scientific System of Medicine, which looks after the interest of doctors as well as the well being of the community at large. It has its Headquarter in Delhi and State / Terr. Branches in 30 States and Union Territories. It has over 2, 60,000 doctors as its members through more than 1765 active local branches spread across the country.

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