

IS SUNSHINE FATTENING?

By Patrick J. Tyson

The short answer is **yes**, it can be.

The human body absorbs energy from sunlight. This energy goes to warm the body. As a consequence, food that might otherwise be metabolized to warm the body may be stored as fat.

For an average person, lying prone in the bright sunshine of the middle latitudes, absorption of sunshine can result in a solar energy intake of roughly 300 Calories (these are dietetic Calories, not thermal calories) per one-hundred pounds of body weight per hour. If there is no reduction in food intake and no increase in exercise to match this energy intake, then any food taken in excess of the body's metabolic needs will be stored as fat.

Hence, sunshine can be fattening!

You can compensate for this energy gain by either not eating as much as you otherwise do (most people lose some appetite after lying in the hot sun), or by increasing your metabolic activity (exercise), or both.

For exercise, swimming away from a crocodile (about 2 mph) expends some 406 Calories per hundred pounds of body weight per hour. Rowing away from a crocodile (about 6 mph), expends some 776 Calories per hundred pounds of body weight per hour. Failing to do either may result in a weight gain by the crocodile.

Copyright 2007 by Patrick J. Tyson www.climates.com
Last edited in January of 2010