

# Shedding light on windows and health



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Your windows might be your principal source of Vitamin D, essential for a healthy life.

Natural light plays a critical role in human physiology and mental well-being, particularly in northern climates where the amount of daylight during the winter months is limited.

As our time with sunshine diminishes at this time of year, it's an important time to think about sunlight, as well as the windows on your new home.

Representatives of RESCON recently learned about the latest research on the importance of natural light relative to building design at the sixth Velux Daylight Symposium in London, attended by leading experts and representatives from more than 30 countries.

It was an auspicious occasion as the United Nations General Assembly had declared 2015 to be the International Year of Light.

Sunlight might be the most underappreciated form of energy on Earth but there is no denying its importance. It turns out that daylight is critical for new-home buyers in more ways than one.

To begin with, most people spend up to 90 per cent of their time indoors. The natural light they receive is often through windows and skylights.

Newer research links natural light directly to health care recovery times and education outcomes in youth.

For instance, the orientation of a room and its windows has

by 15 per cent when they're in a good indoor climate.

In Scandinavia, hospitals, schools, offices and housing have been designed with an eye to getting the optimal amount of natural light for occupants.

Ironically we spend a great deal of time and money avoiding the sunlight. Excessive sun avoidance, inadvertent or otherwise, can be to our detriment. The orientation of buildings and windows relative to solar movement — how the sun tracks across the sky — is

therefore important on many levels.

The location of a building and the interplay between natural and artificial light has an enormous impact on mood and sleep.

Where windows are concerned, energy efficiency cannot be the only overriding consideration especially with respect to the physical and mental health of occupants.

It is no wonder that many new-home buyers intuitively want larger windows

and panoramic views wherever possible.

In condos, large glass surfaces have been criticized for being a sub-optimal cladding choice for energy efficiency without any regard to the beneficial health effects of large windows and daylight.

It is good to see that the Europeans are shedding light on this less than obvious but nonetheless critical factor in new-housing considerations. New-home buyers in Ontario should therefore pay attention to sun orientation of their

potential new homes, adding to the many other positive health-related attributes of new housing.

For more information on the symposium, go to [www.thedaylightsite.com](http://www.thedaylightsite.com). Velux also supports a magazine devoted to all things daylight which can be found at <http://da.velux.com>.

— *Richard Lyall, president of RESCON, has represented residential construction in Ontario since 1991. Contact him @RESCONprez or at [lyall@rescon.com](mailto:lyall@rescon.com).*

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