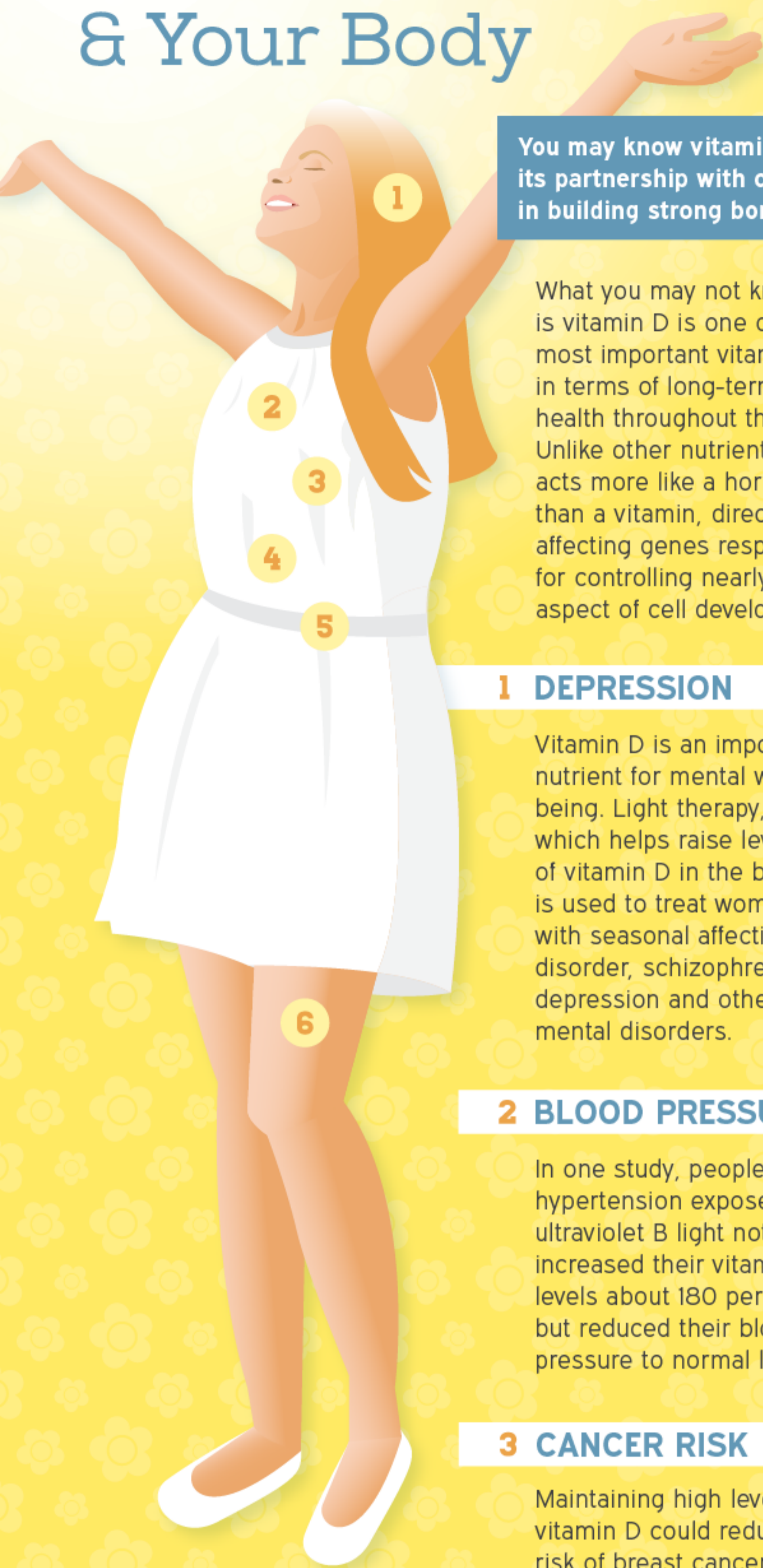# Vitamin D
& Your Body

You may know vitamin D for its partnership with calcium in building strong bones.

What you may not know is vitamin D is one of the most important vitamins in terms of long-term health throughout the body. Unlike other nutrients, it acts more like a hormone than a vitamin, directly affecting genes responsible for controlling nearly every aspect of cell development.

1 DEPRESSION

Vitamin D is an important nutrient for mental well-being. Light therapy, which helps raise levels of vitamin D in the body, is used to treat women with seasonal affective disorder, schizophrenia, depression and other mental disorders.

2 BLOOD PRESSURE

In one study, people with hypertension exposed to ultraviolet B light not only increased their vitamin D levels about 180 percent, but reduced their blood pressure to normal levels.

3 CANCER RISK

Maintaining high levels of vitamin D could reduce the risk of breast cancer as much as 50 percent; colorectal cancer up to 253 percent; and heart disease, stroke and peripheral artery disease more than 100 percent.

4 IMMUNE SYSTEM

Low vitamin D levels put women at risk for infectious diseases like colds and flu. Vitamin D helps immune system cells destroy the bacterium that causes tuberculosis, increases production of insulin and enables heart cells to contract.

5 DIABETES

Research is under way to determine if high vitamin D levels may help prevent or delay the onset of type 2 diabetes in adults who have prediabetes and are at high risk for type 2 diabetes.

6 STRONG BONES

Vitamin D helps the body absorb calcium, an important nutrient for building bone and slowing bone loss. It also can help treat the symptoms of osteoporosis.

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www.HealthyWomen.org/vitamin-d