

Information on Cleansing Diets

Cleansing is often promoted to improve health by 'cleansing' the bowel and removing toxins from the body that come from the air we breathe, the food we eat and the beverages we drink.

Supporters claim the goal of cleansing is to promote healthy intestinal bacteria, boost energy and immunity, and start weight loss. However, there's little evidence that cleansing produces these effects. In fact, some forms of cleansing can be harmful. Cleansing diets, also known as detoxification or detox diets, are not recommended for preventing disease or improving bowel or overall health and especially are not for growing children and teens.

This fact sheet provides information about popular cleansing diets, including complete or partial fasting and food elimination diets. Tips for maintaining health without the use of cleansing diets are also provided.

What is a Cleansing Diet?

Cleansing is the removal of material from the bowel or colon. It can be done by a variety of methods, either alone or in combination:

- | using a herbal or medicinal or laxative preparation
- | fasting or following a strict diet that eliminates major foods or food groups
- | taking in a large amount of water, juice or fiber.

Do Cleansing Diets Work?

There is no scientific evidence to show that cleansing maintains or improves bowel health, prevents colon cancer or achieves lasting weight loss. Your intestine, lungs, liver and kidneys effectively remove waste from your body every day.

Are Cleansing Diets Safe?

Cleansing diets, especially if done often or followed for a long time, can be harmful and cause unpleasant side effects such as cramping, bloating, nausea, vomiting, headaches, lack of energy and dizziness. Cleansing diets can also change the healthy bacteria in the colon and lead to other more serious side effects that include:

- | changes in electrolyte levels

- | dehydration
- | low blood sugar
- | low or high blood pressure
- | interactions with medications
- | vitamin and mineral deficiencies.



Steps you can take

A healthy well-balanced diet that includes a variety of foods, dietary fibre and fluids will help you maintain a healthy bowel, stay regular, prevent chronic disease and give you the energy you need to stay healthy and feel good.

Being physically active every day is another important healthy lifestyle choice that will help you to stay healthy and feel good.

Special Considerations

It is important to talk to a medical doctor or registered dietitian about the safety of following a cleansing diet. Your health is at greater risk from a cleanse if you have any of the following conditions:

- | Diabetes
- | Kidney, heart or liver disease
- | Eating disorder
- | Are pregnant or breastfeeding
- | Take medications (including prescription, over-the-counter or herbal products). Interactions between cleansing regimens and medications or herbs could cause distressing symptoms or serious health problems.



Additional Resources

- | Canada's Food Guide - <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/food-guide-aliment/index-eng.php>
- | Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines for Adults - http://www.csep.ca/CMFiles/Guidelines/CSEP_PAGuidelines_adults_en.pdf
- | Constipated? How to Prevent and Manage Your Symptoms - <http://www.pennutrition.com/viewhandout.aspx?Portal=UbY=&id=JMbqXAE=&PreviewHandout=bA==>
- | Dietitians of Canada - Find a Dietitian - <http://www.dietitians.ca/find>
- | How to Choose a Weight Loss Program - <http://www.pennutrition.com/viewhandout.aspx?Portal=UbY=&id=JMfpWQM=&PreviewHandout=bA==>

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