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Detox Diets Busted!

SEND PRINT

By Gloria Tsang for RD.ca

For some of us, spring cleaning may mean a spring detox diet. But before rushing out to purchase one of those kits or before trying a detox diet made famous by a celebrity, read on.

Eating healthy and drinking plenty of water is the most natural way to prevent toxins from building up.

1. Detoxify Your Life
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What Are They?

Detox diets claim to help you get rid of toxins in your body and therefore help you lose weight, feel better and have more energy. A detox diet usually encompasses an array of activities: fasting for three to 10 days with the support of juice; taking multi-vitamins or herbal supplements; or avoiding sugar, alcohol, caffeine and junk food.

For some, detox also includes saunas, colon-cleansing or chelation therapy. For instance, the Master Cleanse used by Beyonce instructs followers to drink cups of water with lemon juice, maple syrup and cayenne pepper. Model Kate Moss followed another detox diet, outlined by author Nish Joshi, who promotes a strict 21-day diet of soy, poultry, fish, brown rice, steamed vegetables, lentils, beans and green tea.

Are You Intoxicated?

There's no doubt that our living environment is increasingly polluted. But what's considered toxic? Different people will give you different answers. It may be heavy metals, industrial materials, pesticides and radioactive materials. Some may say drugs, alcohol and artificial additives. When we are diagnosed with high cholesterol, we know that our blood total cholesterol, LDL and triglycerides may be too high. So what about toxic? How do we measure toxicity and how do you know if you're intoxicated?

The Science of Detox

There are almost no studies looking at the validity of these detox diets. Marc Cohen, a professor of Complementary Medicine at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT) published a scientific review of detox diets in the Australian Family Physician, December 2007 edition. He found that there were plenty of randomized controlled trials (RCT) on drug and alcohol detox, but none on environmental or junk food toxins. Of the clinical detox studies that exist, the majority are observational studies on a detox program promoted by the Church of Scientology. Some studies suggested that it reduced PCB, PBB and dioxin levels. This program is also the basis of the drug rehab program used to treat World Trade Center rescue workers, with high dose niacin (Vitamin B3) and polyunsaturated oils along with exercise and extensive sauna sweating. Whether these regimes would be suitable for the average person is still open to discussion.

Bottom Line

Detox diets are not quick fixes. If you are not interested in eating healthy, going on a detox diet for a short period is not going to make you healthier. If you fast for 10 days then go back to your 3000-calorie-a-day diet, you are not going to lose those pounds permanently. If you are concerned about pesticides, choose organic produce. If you are concerned about "toxins" from junk food, avoid junk food rather than going on a fast. To eat healthy, the best way is to eat a balanced diet with lots of fresh produce and whole grains. It doesn't sound quick and exciting, but it works.

Gloria Tsang, RD is the founder of HealthCastle.com., your source for advice on nutrition. For more healthy eating information—written by dietitians—printable nutrition guides, or to use interactive diet tools, visit their website.

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Take her to lunch	Take her to lunch
Give her flowers	Give her flowers
Make her dinner	Make her dinner
Nothing	Nothing

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