



The Ultimate Cleanse

Detoxifying the body, or sabotaging your diet?

OK, I'll admit it. When I heard that Beyonce lost 22 pounds in 14 days by following the Master Cleanse Diet and consuming nothing more than a lemon juice concoction of maple syrup, water and Cayenne pepper, one side of my brain said she was nuts. But the other side thought, "Hmmm. Maybe?"

For generations, various diets that promise to cleanse the body of its toxins, boost health and lose weight have led many to jump on a bandwagon—think The Grapefruit Diet fad of the '70s. While Beyonce dropped weight and looked phenomenal for her role in the movie "Dreamgirls," soon after production she admitted to putting the weight right back on. Is there a need for a cleansing diet? Do these diets truly cleanse the body, or are they doing more harm than good?

Unproven Cleansing

"The goal of a person going on a detox or cleanse diet is to eliminate certain foods or toxins, and add foods or beverages that will help them function better," says Blair Giles, a registered and licensed dietitian in Atlanta. "The main organs that people are closing in on are the liver and the kidneys. However, there isn't much scientific evidence that shows detox diets do a better job at cleansing the body than eating a healthy, nutritious diet. Most studies show

that your body has its own cleansing mechanism, so as long as you don't put the bad toxins in, your body will take care of itself."

While nutritionists say a one-day fast or cleanse isn't harmful to the body, many long-term cleansing and detox diets—especially those promoting weight loss—do exactly the opposite of what they claim by cutting out vitamins, minerals and other much-needed nutrients and good-for-you toxins from the body, and, ultimately, causing most to overcompensate when coming off the cleanses.

"My fear for those who do these diets for more than a day is that a person is going to cut their food and nutrition intake so low that their energy levels and blood sugar levels drop, [and] they are going to have a hard time cognitively and they are just going to bottom out," says Page Love, president of Nutrifit Sport Therapy in Atlanta and a registered and licensed dietitian.

Beneficial Detox

Although nutritionists question cleansing and detox diets, those who offer cleansing programs claim these diets help eliminate toxins so the body can, in fact, ingest more nutrients.

"Detox diets are a more intense cleanse, often with a lot of fiber or a lot of water," says Yakov Koyfman, a naturopathic physician and owner of Nor-

Popular Cleansing Diets

Master Cleanse:

Said to eliminate toxins and congestion that have built up in the body by eliminating solid foods, this diet promotes drinking a cold or hot mixture of lemon juice, maple syrup, water and Cayenne pepper. Laxatives are recommended during this 10-day diet.

Raw Foods:

Said to prevent and heal chronic diseases and sickness, this diet encourages weight loss by regulating the body's metabolic processes using the enzymes found in raw foods (often lost during cooking).

Liquid Fasts:

Fasts such as juice fasting are touted as a strict detoxification diet to renew and rejuvenate the body. They often include herbs and require participants to partake in yoga and meditation programs.

Cleansing Powders/Liquids:

These powders and liquids help eliminate waste clogging the colon and flowing through the bloodstream, promote renewed vitality and relieve constipation.

Cabbage Soup Diet:

Not promoted as a long-term weight-loss diet, this low-fat, high-fiber diet is followed for seven days to cleanse the body and kick-start a diet. Unlike the name, the diet does not consist solely of cabbage soup but fruits, vegetables, beef, dairy and grains followed on different days.

Grapefruit Diet:

Said to reduce insulin levels and regulate blood sugar, the diet requires participants to eat one-half of a grapefruit with every meal and to drink several glasses of grapefruit juice, resulting in weight loss.

Colonics:

While not a diet, colonics performed in medical spas and facilities literally flush out the toxins in the body with an added benefit of minor weight loss.

cross-based Koyfman Whole Body Cleansing fasting center. "Even when we eat healthy foods, but especially unhealthy foods, the foods accumulate in our digestive systems, leaving behind toxins. Our immune system is constantly fighting the toxins that remain, wasting energy and stealing our healing abilities. When we detoxify, we have more energy and more healing power for living and working."

A variety of cleansing practices can be found throughout Atlanta, with people swearing they've never felt better after trying a cleansing diet. For example, Arden's Garden, which sells fresh juices and smoothies, offers cleansing classes and recipes for various diets, including a Two-Day Detox of nothing more than grapefruit juice, orange juice, lemon juice and water, or the Love Your Liver three-day fasting program that includes lemon juice, apple juice, blended salads and little more. Because these programs are short-term, people are not experiencing severe weight and nutrient loss; instead, they are truly cleansing their bodies to open them up to receive more nutrients when returning to a normal diet.

Koyfman works with clients to develop lifestyle cleansing diets for the body's overall health, such as joint cleansing, lymph cleansing or kidney cleansing. "This is a healthy lifestyle, done for the rest of their lives," he says. "A cleansing diet includes foods that are 60-percent to 70-percent raw, such as vegetables and fruits, and the cooked part will include proteins from fish and meat and some kind of whole grains, like brown rice. A cleansing diet will also alter what time of day you will ingest certain foods because the body has different digestive energy levels throughout the day. The morning has the highest digestive levels and, when the sun goes down, it decreases, which is why we may have some [people] eat the largest meals at breakfast and lunch and keep dinner very light, sometimes skipping dinner or drinking a liquid dinner."

Similar to Koyfman's raw foods cleanse is the Raw Foods Diet, which is the only cleansing diet nutritionists recommend. "It's a better diet," Giles says. "Some raw foods diets only allow fruits and vegetables, but the ones that allow nuts and whole grains are great because that is how most of us should be eating anyway."

Still, when it comes to cleansing our bodies, nutritionists and cleansers reiterate the message most of us already know: There is just no substitute for a healthy diet. —Lissa Poirot

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