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Debunking the Trend of Detox Dieting



What Exactly is Detox Dieting?

The philosophy behind detox dieting is fairly simple. “Detox dieting is based on the belief that foods we eat and our environment cause our body to accumulate toxins in our system,” explains Steve J. Roch Jr. a Registered Dietitian and Representative for the Louisiana Dietetic Association. “Wishing to purge themselves or ‘detox,’ some believe herbal concoctions or starvation fasts offer an answer to cleanse their system.” These toxins are said to accumulate in the body and have been linked to everything from headaches and nausea to unattractive hair.

How Does the Diet Work?

There are many variations of the diet. One particularly popular version, the “Master Cleanse” calls for only drinking a mixture of water, lemon juice, maple syrup and cayenne pepper. Some diets involve starvation fasts, while others include eating cleansing foods, like brown rice, steamed veggies and fruit.

What are the Dangers?

Detox diets usually don’t just involve what you eat. Herbal supplements such as laxatives are often suggested as well as enemas to further cleanse the colon region. This part of the diet is one of the most controversial aspects. Laxatives can be a dangerous way to lose weight and enemas can be addictive, much like tanning and can lead to health complications.

“Starvation or fasts can lead to a disruption of a person’s metabolism,” says Roch. This can actually cause weight gain and muscle and mineral loss. “In addition, malnutrition can result from a lack of food intake. Herbal concoctions are the most dangerous, especially, if someone has been prescribed medication—the interaction may cause numerous problems, even death.” Some side effects of herbal detox include extreme weight loss, nausea, vomiting, weakness, dehydration, and heart problems.

“Children are especially vulnerable to severe changes in their body’s chemistry. Pre-teens and teenagers should not consider diets,” advises Roch.

“Unfortunately, when a movie star or television personality samples a fad diet and get results, everyone

wants to know the secret to their success,” adds Roch. He says a healthy way to lose weight is by eating moderate portions and finding physical activities that you enjoy. If you are health conscious and would like a beneficial way to aid your body’s digestion process, Roch suggests the following tips:

Eat a diet rich in phytochemicals (plant chemicals) from fruits and vegetables. This can prevent ‘free radical oxidation’ or cell destruction.

Include at least 35 grams of fiber each day, which helps promote heart health, cleanses the colon and improves blood sugar levels. Eat a combination of whole grains: breads, rice, cereal, and pastas. Reduce red meat consumption.

For more information, visit the Louisiana Dietetic Association Web site www.eatrightlouisiana.org

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