

Juicing: Healthy Detox or Diet Trap?

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Juicing -- if you believe its avid fans -- is a great way to detox the body, prevent disease and lose weight.

There's something appealing about being able to blend up broccoli, kale and cucumbers and mask them with the sweet taste of strawberries. You get your vitamins without having to chow down on salad every day at lunch.



Plus you can tell everyone you're juicing, which helps you look cool in today's fitness-focused world.

But (you knew there was a "but" coming), you can't juice all day, every day, and expect to stay healthy. **We took to the experts to answer your most pressing juice questions:**

What are some of the benefits of juicing?

New research shows eating up to seven servings of fruits and vegetables a day can have a significant impact on your lifespan. For those of us who don't have time to cut up or cook two servings with every meal, juicing is an easy way to consume them on the go. Many people don't really like to eat fruits and vegetables, and this gives them a way to feel like they are doing something good for themselves," says Gayl Canfield, director of nutrition for [Pritkin Longevity Center](#).



Juicing provides all the same vitamins, minerals and phytonutrients as eating whole fruits and vegetables, Canfield says. And the water content can help you stay hydrated.

Juicing is also a good way to use up any about-to-spoil produce, which means you're doing your part to stop [food waste](#).

Juicing is low-calorie, right?

Not exactly. While juicing is probably low-calorie compared to a cheeseburger and fries, it's a very concentrated source of calories.

A cup of pineapple, for instance, is about 83 calories, but a cup of pineapple juice is 120 calories. An 8-ounce glass of orange juice may contain as many as four medium oranges, Canfield says.

"Would a person actually sit down and eat four oranges in one sitting?" she asks. "But you can down that glass of orange juice in fewer than 5 minutes."

And because the fruit is more concentrated, so is the sugar content.

A cup of pomegranate juice contains 37 grams of sugar, compared to just 12 grams in a cup of whole pomegranate.

Consuming your food in liquid form may also leave you feeling less fulfilled, meaning you'll eat more calories than you would if you simply chewed the food, says [Jennifer Nelson](#), director of clinical dietetics and nutrition at the Mayo Clinic.

Will it help me detox?

First, let's start with why you think your body needs to detox. Your organs -- particularly the liver and kidneys -- and your immune system already work hard to rid your body of toxins.

"There is nothing in the medical literature to affirm that the body needs an outside source to cleanse itself," says registered dietician Deborah Levy.

Still, some people say juicing helps them transition to healthier habits. It's worth a shot -- of juice that is.

For clients who insist on doing a cleanse, Levy recommends they limit it to three days.

Can I go on an all-juice diet?

You can, but it's not a good idea.

"You want your diet to be balanced and healthy and to include protein, dairy, whole grains, fruits, vegetables and fats," Nelson says. "Some foods don't juice properly -- like fish or whole wheat bread."



We'll let you think about that yummy concoction for a minute.

When you juice fruits and vegetables, you're "mechanically pulverizing," them, Nelson says. Doing so separates the fiber from the juice. This fiber helps regulate your blood sugar levels after you eat a piece of whole fruit. Without fiber, the sugar in juice goes unchecked.

"The wonderful health effects of fiber -- satiety value, gastrointestinal regulation, (bad) cholesterol lowering and blood glucose regulations are missing in the juice," Canfield says.

Although going on a liquid diet might help you lose weight in the short term, it can seriously mess with your metabolism. And lean muscle mass starts to break down after just a few days -- meaning your body will burn fewer calories overall.

"Very few people will ever voluntarily consume a liquid diet for life," Nelson says, and the pounds will quickly pile back on once you re-introduce solid foods.

So what's the bottom line?

Juicing in moderation can help you consume essential nutrients, but it's not a good way to detox or diet.

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