

health check

LIQUID ASSETS

Considering a juice fast? Read this first

With the advent of home juicers, many claim to drink their way to wellness and weight loss. Kim Kardashian apparently did a juice fast to get wedding-ready, Beyoncé reportedly lost nearly 10 kg on a lemon juice and cayenne pepper diet, and Salma Hayek swears by Cooler Cleanse juice.

Juice fasts are said to cleanse the kidneys, detox the liver and bowels, and cure a host of diseases. Is this just another fad diet, or is there something more to it? Nathalie Mat, a clinical dietitian and chair of the Gauteng South branch of the Association for Dietetics in South Africa, sets us straight.



LIQUID DIET VS JUICE FAST

A liquid diet prescribed by a doctor is intended to reduce the load on the digestive system, in the case of bowel illness, in preparation for surgery or if one is physically incapable of eating solid food. It may vary in composition, including certain juices and soups, and might not provide a complete source of nutrition. A juice fast, on the other hand, is a voluntary abstinence from solid food.

DRINK YOUR VEG

Fresh veggie juice is a concentrated vitamin bomb – juicing extracts many of the nutrients, but leaves behind the valuable fibre.

When it comes to the gut, the ‘use it or lose it’ principle applies. Foods with bulk help stimulate a healthy gut lining – a purely liquid diet may reduce this vital stimulation. Foods that we chew for ourselves are more satisfying than foods we drink. I recommend eating vegetables over drinking them.

WARNING!

A JUICE FAST OR CLEANSE COULD BE DAMAGING TO THE HEALTH OF CHILDREN, PREGNANT OR NURSING WOMEN AND DIABETICS. ALWAYS CONSULT A HEALTH-CARE PROFESSIONAL BEFORE MAKING ANY EXTREME CHANGES TO YOUR DIET.

TIP

ON A BUSY DAY, A SMOOTHIE CAN MAKE A HEALTHY, PORTABLE LUNCH. BE SURE TO ADD A SOURCE OF PROTEIN AND/OR FAT, SUCH AS YOGHURT OR NUTS.



THE BIGGER PICTURE

A juice fast or cleanse is not a balanced diet, and there is a lack of trustworthy evidence that drinking juice alone is going to bring about any constructive gains. Fresh juice may have a health halo, but drinking juice all day means that you are possibly taking in a lot of fruit sugar without any protein. This is a recipe for muscle loss, rather than weight loss.

While no juice can replace a plate of whole fruits and vegetables, fresh juice can be a great way of increasing your vitamin intake as part of a healthy, balanced diet.

DETOX OR DESTRUCT?

It’s important that people understand going on a fast will not help them detox. The liver needs energy to work properly. A diet including whole fruits and veg, good-quality proteins and healthy fats is the way to go.

WHAT ABOUT SMOOTHIES?

Smoothies often contain added yoghurt or ice cream. It’s best to make your own so you know exactly what’s going into that blender. Bear in mind smoothies are high in kilojoules, so don’t have one plus a meal – that’s basically eating two meals in one go. **MX**

TEXT: LAUREN SHAPIRO; PHOTOGRAPHY: GREATISTOCK/STOCKFOOD; COURTESY IMAGE