

# Health Awareness

A County Health Pool Publication



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## Cleansing Diets – Flushing Out the Myths



**D**ozens of books and hundreds of web sites promote “detox” regimens. Spas invite dieters to spend thousands of dollars to starve themselves in exotic locations. But many dietitians and medical experts say these diets are pointless at best and dangerous at worst.

Like other fad diets, detox regimens promise quick weight losses that are ultimately unsustainable, critics say. They’re based on “junk science” rather than a true understanding of how the body works. Worst of all, extreme diets can cause serious side effects in vulnerable groups.

One expert dietitian says “These diets can give people a false sense of security, a feeling that they’ve been protective of their health. Then, when the diet’s over, they go back to their normal way of eating.”

The science behind the detox theory is deeply flawed, says an internal medicine specialist. The body already has multiple systems in place -- including the liver, kidneys, and gastrointestinal tract -- that do a perfectly good job of eliminating toxins from the body within hours of consumption.

There’s no evidence at all that any of these approaches augment the body’s own mechanisms.

### **A Grain of Wisdom in Detox**

Most detox regimens urge dieters to strip down their diets to the basics of water and raw fruits or vegetables. Some diets also recommend laxatives, enemas, or colonic irrigation to speed up the detox process. It’s true that the average person doesn’t drink enough water or consume enough fruits and vegetables.

The problem is, most detox diets are so restrictive that they’re ineffective for long-term use. And any weight loss that occurs during the diet is likely to be temporary.

The use of laxatives in detox diets also raises red flags among dietitians, as laxative abuse is commonly associated with eating disorders. The belief that laxatives are useful for weight control is a myth, the National Eating Disorders Association notes.

In fact, laxative abuse can cause severe dehydration and heart or colon damage, the association says. Colonic irrigation, another fixture of some detox diets, carries the risk of bowel perforation or infection, both of which can cause death.

(Over)



## Cleansing Diets . . . (Continued)

Detox dieters report a variety of benefits, but experts say none can be traced to the idea of detoxification. Some will tell you they experience fewer headaches, but this can be traced to other lifestyle changes such as reduction in alcohol and caffeine intake.

Some report they have clearer skin and less bloating as a result, but clearer skin can result from improved hydration, and less bloating could be a result of eating less food.

Some detox dieters report a boost in energy and even a sense of euphoria. The feeling -- also commonly reported by people who are fasting -- is actually a reaction to starvation.

There's something to be gained from avoiding large quantities of alcohol, smoke, junk food, or anything to excess. Moderation is best, but these regimens are anything but moderate.

Source: [www.webmd.com](http://www.webmd.com).



## Detox Diets: Not for Weight Loss

### Popular Fad Diets

The *3 Day Diet* is a fad diet, dating back to 1985. It promises quick weight loss, cleansing, lower cholesterol, and increased energy. The 3 Day Diet is a regimented plan that must be followed exactly for three days at a time, followed by normal eating for four or five days, a 10 pound weight loss in three days is promised. Realistically, most of that weight is likely due to fluid loss and not the more desirable fat loss.

The *Master Cleanse* -- also known as the *Lemonade Diet* -- dates back to the 1970s. It got a publicity boost recently when pop star Beyoncé Knowles lost 20 pounds in 10 days for a movie role. The news caused a sales upswing of the pricey maple syrup that's used in the lemonade. But Knowles soon regained the weight after she finished shooting the film.

If you're considering a detox diet, leave your weight out of it. Any diet that restricts calories can lead to quick weight loss. But you'll gain that weight back after a water or juice fast. Most of the weight lost on these detox diets is just water weight.

Water-only diets put your body into a state called ketosis, which means your body has no carbohydrates to burn for energy, so it has to burn stored fat or whatever else is available.

Juice diets prevent your body from going into ketosis, but they're not a long-term weight-loss solution because they deny the body other essential nutrients.

## Benefits Corner

### 2008 ID Cards

If you and/or your dependents did not make plan changes during open enrollment for 2008, please continue to use your current ID card for the 2008 policy year. If you and/or your dependents made plan changes during open enrollment 2008, you will receive a new ID card. If you have lost your ID card or would like to request additional ID cards, please call Anthem Customer Service at 1 866 698-0087. If you have any further questions, please contact your CHP Benefits Administrator at 303 861-0507.