

PENNY SAVER NEWS

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Better than a Cleanse

If you search the web for detox diets or cleansing diets, be prepared for an avalanche! There are millions of possibilities out there, just waiting to take your money in exchange for promises of new health, vim, vigor, vitality, increased immune strength, weight loss, better memory and who knows what else. Just don't expect the results to match those promises. Unfortunately, the medical evidence is pretty dismal.

The idea that we might need to clean our colons or detox our livers has been around for centuries. People have been trying all kinds of things. And doctors have been trying to tell us for as long that our bodies don't need this kind of treatment! The exceptions would be someone with extreme constipation, or with kidney disease. If the kidneys can't filter our blood then we need dialysis, but not a detox diet. Constipation problems may need a stimulant for awhile, but a high fiber diet will keep the colon moving quite well.

Most of the time our colons do just fine cleansing themselves. Every time we have a bowel movement our colon just eliminated a whole lot of 'stuff', including whatever toxins might have been present. One of the main jobs of our livers is to break down or inactivate toxins. That's its job naturally. It doesn't need the help of special diets. The kidneys then filter the broken down compounds out of the blood and squirt them out when we go to the bathroom.

So putting ourselves on really limited diets, nothing but lemon juice, or cabbage, or red peppers and water, does nothing to help the body with its natural functions. In fact, such extreme diets are more likely to damage our bodies. When we are not eating enough protein to maintain our normal functions, our bodies will 'borrow' protein from other parts. So our immune system will suffer, or our hearts will lose muscle. Our arteries can develop micro-tears, which mean they're more likely to fill up with plaques that lead to heart attacks.

The results of extreme diets and colon cleansing range from dizziness and dehydration to cramps, vomiting, diarrhea, anemia, liver damage, severe infections and ultimately to deaths. None of these sounds like enhanced immune systems or improved memory! They are life-threatening.

So, what should you do if you want to help your liver, or make life easier for your colon? There are healthy ways to eat that can keep you moving without putting the rest of your body at risk. One of the main ingredients for that kind of diet is fiber. Dietary fiber acts like a sponge as it moves through our intestines. It collects water and swells up. A big, soft, wet, bulky sponge is much easier to squeeze through the intestines. So it will move more quickly and easily. The fiber in beans, whole grains, vegetables and fruit will keep things moving along. But don't trust fiber-fortified foods to be a shortcut. Inulin in particular is a commonly added fiber that doesn't have much effect at all on constipation. It mostly produces gas. And remember that most juices have had their fiber removed. Eat the whole fruit, not just the juice.

Another important ingredient in a healthy diet is water. This is NOT just water from a bottle! The water in fruits and vegetables, soups and salads, even coffee and tea all help to keep us hydrated and the contents of our colons moist.

Finally, aim for a balance. You need some lean protein to keep 'the hungrys' away longer and keep your protein in balance. You need some whole grains for carbs for your brain. Get some veggies at every meal. Yes, breakfast too! Make an omelet with diced tomatoes and peppers. To find a balanced diet for yourself, go to <http://choosemyplate.gov> and follow the links to the SuperTracker.

Here's a veggie-ful breakfast or dinner dish. You can reheat leftovers later too.

Veggie-Cheese Frittata

2 cups peeled, shredded potato	½ cup chopped onion
½ cup chopped zucchini	1/3 cup chopped red bell pepper
3 large eggs	1 ½ tsp Italian (or pizza) seasoning
¼ cup reduced fat feta cheese	salt, pepper to taste

Preheat oven to 450° F. Coat an ovenproof skillet with cooking spray and heat over medium-high heat. Add vegetables to skillet and cook, stirring often, until potatoes are lightly browned, about 7-8 minutes. Beat eggs and seasoning in small bowl. Pour eggs over vegetables in skillet. Reduce heat to medium-low and cook 2-3 minutes, until eggs are set. Sprinkle with cheese and put in oven. Bake 3-4 minutes until cheese is browned. Cut in quarters and serve. Serves 4.

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