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Going Raw

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**Raw food diet
is helpful for
losing weight.**

Going Raw

BY WINSTON J. CRAIG

**Cooking unleashes
some phytonutrients.**



Some people are switching off their ovens. Instead, they are turning on blenders, food processors and dehydrators to prepare their food. A raw food diet has surged in popularity once again.

Nutritious wild berries, along with organic whole foods, are preferred to commercially-produced food. Green smoothies, made from juicing raw vegetables and fruits, provide the consumer a good dose of antioxidants.

For a raw food diet, fruits and vegetables dominate the menu. Sprouted peas and beans, nuts and seeds, nut butters, grains, cold-pressed extra-virgin olive oil, raw virgin coconut oil and herbs are common fare. Some even include unpasteurized dairy foods and raw eggs. It is claimed that raw food contains live enzymes to assist with digestion. Heat-



ing food above 118° Fahrenheit destroys the enzymes in food, and lessens the nutritional value they claim. In reality, enzymes are inactivated by the acidic environment of the stomach, rendering them non-functional.

Some people believe a raw food diet is the healthiest diet, having curative and health-promoting properties such as providing more energy, boosting immune function, reducing allergies, slowing down aging and purifying the body of toxins. They claim that heating vegetable oils produce measurable levels of unhealthy trans fats. Scientific evidence to support these claims is difficult to locate.

Eating a raw food diet does help you lose weight, since many raw foods are low in fat and calories, and high in fiber. The raw food diet is rich in health-promoting phytochemicals and has little saturated fat and salt, resulting in lower cholesterol and blood pressure levels. However, following a raw food diet for a number of years is often associated with a lower bone mineral density.

Raw food diets are inappropriate for infants and children since the low caloric intake does not sustain appropriate

growth. Consuming only raw foods will limit the variety of one's diet and certain food groups would be under-represented. One has to ensure getting enough protein, iron, zinc, vitamins B12 and D, calcium, and other nutrients. A vitamin supplement may be necessary to make up for nutrient gaps in the diet.

There are actually some advantages to using cooked foods. Cooking unleashes two to three times more lycopene and other carotenoids (the pigments in red, yellow-orange and green vegetables) for the body to absorb. These carotenoids protect against heart disease and cancer. Baking bread with yeast activates the enzyme phytase, which breaks down phytic acid. This process greatly increases the absorption of zinc and calcium. The availability of these minerals from uncooked grains is low. Cooking also destroys dangerous bacteria such as salmonella and *E. coli*, associated with foodborne illnesses. Food poisoning can result from eating raw or unpasteurized milk and raw eggs.

While eating raw fruit and vegetables is a healthy plan, eating only raw food may not be the best plan. Due to the risk of food poisoning, a raw food diet isn't recommended for pregnant women, young children, seniors, people with weak immune systems, and those with chronic medical conditions like kidney disease.

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