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Debunking Medical Myths: Detox Diets: Ineffective At Best, Harmful At Worst

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Detoxification generally consists of short-term highly restrictive diets where caloric intake is entirely from juices, organic fruits/vegetables, or supplements specified by the diet. These diets are typically not based on reliable scientific evidence or data.



Detox diets are no more effective for weight loss than normal caloric restriction

In one study, the calorie restriction group had lower BMI, waist circumference, hip circumference, and waist to hip ratio (1).

Detox can be stressful

Low-energy detox diets can significantly increase stress
Increased stress can lead to increased levels of stress hormones including cortisol

Elevated cortisol levels, particularly in the long-term, are associated with increased fat storage as well as even binge eating by stimulating appetite

In the long-term this increase in appetite can cause a rebound weight gain

Other options can be more effective

There are better options out there: intermittent fasting and the paleo diet lead to weight loss because of overall decreased caloric intake (3).

These other diets are also superior in terms of providing a healthy variety of essential macro and micronutrients

Try high intensity training as well! Studies show that short bursts of high intensity training can lead to significant weight loss and improvements in cardiovascular health.

The bottom line

While reliable data on detox diets remains scarce, our preliminary review seems to show that other options are safer and more effective at long-term weight loss and promotion of health.



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2. Klein AV, Klat H. Detox diets for toxin elimination and weight management: a critical review of the evidence. *J Hum Nutr Diet*. 2015;28(6):675-686. doi:10.1111/jhn.12286
3. Obert J, Pearlman M, Obert L, Chapin S. Popular weight loss strategies: a review of four weight loss techniques. *Curr Gastroenterol Rep*. 2017;19(12):61. doi:10.1007/s11894-017-0603-8

