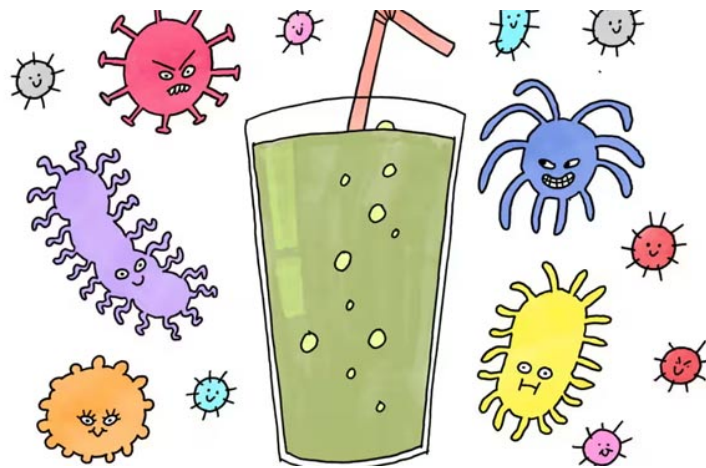


Does a detox diet really detoxify the body?

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After a weekend of bingeing or a week of takeout, you might believe that a 'detox diet,' like a juice cleanse, can repair the damage. But is that really how our bodies work?

According to Dr Emily Leeming, a nutritionist at King's College London, the answer is: no. " *Your body has a built-in detoxification system that helps to remove potentially harmful molecules and waste products* ," she says. " *You don't need a special diet* ." "Toxins" have become a " *scary term* ," but your body can process these types of molecules just fine.

Your liver filters unwanted substances from your blood, such as alcohol and its byproducts, as well as excess fat; your kidneys excrete waste in your urine. Meanwhile, your gut bacteria play a supporting role, helping to break down some compounds in food and drink, and binding potentially harmful molecules together so they can be excreted.



If our internal cleansing systems work so well, why has there been such a long-standing obsession with juice cleanses? 'It seems a bit harsh and counterintuitive,' says Leeming. 'Your cleansing organs actually need energy and nutrients to function properly. By dieting, you're not supporting those organs, you're depriving them of their energy.'

Take the effects of a juice cleanse, for example: "You're not getting enough protein. You're not eating balanced meals. You're probably going to feel extremely hungry and not sleep well." She adds that doing it for a few days probably won't cause long-term harm, "but it's putting your body through a lot of work without any benefits."



Instead of going on a strict cleanse, if you feel your body needs a 'detox,' it's best to feed it a healthy diet. A key element here is fiber : the nutrients found in beans and whole grains help trap and eliminate unwanted compounds in the gut. Staying hydrated is also important.

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