

- Diet

The lemon coffee challenge

Will you really lose weight by adding lemon to coffee?

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By now, we all know that we should never underestimate the power of social media when it comes to promoting weight loss tips. While statistics shows that the most searched category based on hashtag views on TikTok is entertainment, the social app has never fallen short of providing an avenue for users to showcase their newfound weight loss secrets. Fitness and wellness content is all over social media, whether s facts or myths.



Recently, the lemon coffee trend has taken the limelight on TikTok. A lot of users swear by the effectiveness of squeezing some lemon juice into black coffee in making them significantly lose weight. While some swear by it, others swear, in the real sense of the word, at it, claiming to have gained more weight after taking on the lemon coffee challenge. With these conflicting claims, should we or shouldn't we jump on the bandwagon? Let us first look at how the lemon coffee challenge could possibly contribute to weight loss.

Coffee contains caffeine, a diuretic. Think of diuretics as water pills. It makes your body flush out water and sodium through urine output. Sodium, which we get mostly from salt, can contribute to water retention in the body. In excess, it could make one feel bloated. Sodium, an electrolyte, is impacted by potassium levels. Lemon is indeed a good potassium source. These two electrolytes are essential in maintaining hydration levels among other processes in the body, including stabilizing blood pressure. Increasing potassium will decrease sodium level. Therefore, the diuretic effect of caffeine from coffee coupled with the sodium lowering effect of potassium from lemon can possibly make you lose water weight. Water weight loss, however, is not significant and sustainable. Furthermore, a squeeze of lemon juice in a cup of coffee will not be enough to provide that much potassium to significantly impact electrolyte levels in the body.

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Another factor to consider on how the lemon coffee challenge can aid in weight loss is through calorie deficit. If an individual only takes coffee with lemon and refrains from eating other food sources, then natural weight loss will occur as a result of decreased intake of calories. Unfortunately, this type of weight loss is not only unhealthy but also very detrimental to overall health, including emotional and mental wellbeing.

"I can't think of a single benefit of adding lemon to your coffee. I'd actually consider this behavior to be a red flag for disordered eating. Eating for weight loss shouldn't be about restricting yourself or forcing yourself to eat or drink something that's not appetizing. That's a sign that you're not building sustainable habits and it also suggests that you're willing to prioritize losing weight over your well-being," said Samantha Cassetty, MS, RD, a New York City-based registered dietitian and co-author of Sugar Shock.

Some studies also show that bitter and sour flavors can decrease or suppress appetite, thereby contributing to more calorie deficit as a result of decreased appetite. But then again, this method is not necessarily healthy or sustainable. Instead of relying on coffee and lemon, consume a variety of whole and minimally processed food items like fruits and vegetables. Fill up on fiber to enhance satiety and decrease intake of excess calories. Stay hydrated throughout the day for optimum metabolism.

A healthy and sustainable weight loss must be a journey that is centered on incorporating and consumption of mostly plant food sources, fresh produce, lean protein sources, healthy fats, adequate water intake in addition to a generally healthy lifestyle that includes good sleep hygiene, regular physical activity, and healthy coping skills for stress management. Avoidance of toxins and smoking is also important to keep hormones well balanced, especially the hormones that are involved in metabolism and weight management.

Should you do the lemon coffee challenge? I personally do not recommend it for weight loss. There is no harm in enjoying a cup of black coffee with some lemon for its flavor but don't do this in the hopes of achieving your weight loss goals.

Consult a registered nutritionist dietitian for a safe and sustainable weight loss.

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