- Body cleansing

Detoxing myths debunked: Does your body really need a juice cleanse?

The body's internal detox systems are typically capable of handling toxins

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Dubai-based Peyton Abraham recalls often indulging in her own version of 'detox' diets. As she explains, "It was bad; I didn't even consult people. I would just look for easy juices, live on fruits and vegetables for a few days after a weekend of indulgence, and then once I lost weight, I would slowly fall into my old patterns of unhealthy eating. The cycle continued."



That was years ago: Abraham admits that she has finally learnt that becoming fit did not involve fad diets, or worse, her own interpretations of what should be eaten. "I think people tend to have very wrong ideas of what detox diets really mean," she says.

In today's wellness culture, detox diets are all the rage, with many individuals turning to juice cleanses, fasting, or food-specific regimens in hopes of purging their bodies of toxins, boosting energy levels, and shedding unwanted weight. However, are these diets truly effective? Or are they just another short-lived trend?

WHAT ARE DETOX DIETS?

At their core, detox diets aim to 'cleanse' the body of toxins. Detox diets often involve juice cleanses, fasting, or consuming specific foods and supplements. As Atreya Lamba, a functional medicinal practitioner based in Abu Dhabi explains, "These diets are eating patterns that are designed to remove 'toxins' from the body. It involves selfimposed strict regimens, such as juice cleanses, fasting, or consuming specific foods and supplements, believed to purify or cleanse the body. While all these diets vary in approach, the idea remains the same: Ridding the body of harmful substances, rejuvenate energy levels, and promote weight loss."

THE COMPONENTS OF DETOX DIETS

Detox diets can take several forms, with the most common being:

JUICE CLEANSES: These involve consuming only fresh fruit and vegetable juices for a set period, usually ranging from a few days to a week. The idea is that by drinking juices, the body can 'flush out' toxins without the digestive system having to break down solid food.

FASTING: Some detox diets involve periods of fasting or extreme caloric restriction, often combined with liquid-only consumption or certain food groups, such as fruits or vegetables. These fasting periods are supposed to give the digestive system a break, thereby allowing the body to focus on detoxification.

FOOD-SPECIFIC DETOXES:

These diets emphasise foods believed to have detoxifying properties, such as leafy greens, garlic, lemon, and herbal teas. Some diets also promote supplements, such as activated charcoal, cayenne pepper, or detoxifying teas, claiming they help cleanse the body of harmful toxins.

THE TRUTH: YOUR BODY ALREADY HAS DETOX SYSTEMS IN PLACE

As much as detox diets are marketed as quick fixes, the body already has its own robust detoxification systems in place. The liver, kidneys, and digestive system work tirelessly to remove waste and toxins from the body. According to Lamba, "What people often forget is that the human body already has highly effective detoxification systems in place." Here's how they work:

Some detox diets involve periods of fasting or extreme caloric restriction, often combined with liquid-only consumption.

LIVER: The liver processes toxins from food, drinks, and environmental pollutants. It converts these toxins into water-soluble compounds, which are then eliminated through urine or bile.

KIDNEYS: The kidneys filter the blood, removing waste, toxins, and excess fluids from the body. They also help maintain the body's internal balance, including electrolyte levels.

DIGESTIVE SYSTEM: The gut, including the intestines, helps eliminate solid waste. Additionally, the gut microbiome plays a vital role in breaking down waste and supporting regular bowel movements, which help flush out toxins naturally.

THE TRUTH ABOUT TOXINS

Shrishti Dhapola, a Dubaibased nutritionist, explains that the term ‘toxins’ is often used far too loosely. “It’s important to clarify what these toxins really are. They are harmful substances such as pollutants, pesticides and chemicals from food. However, the body has evolved to handle and process these substances through natural detoxification processes, primarily the liver and kidneys,” she says.

While certain environmental pollutants can accumulate in the body, for instance, heavy metals or some chemicals, most people’s everyday exposure to toxins doesn’t require an intervention such as a detox diet. Instead, the body’s internal detox systems are typically capable of handling these substances without the need for restrictive diets.