

# The detox diets

Demystifying detox diets takes a bit of research. *by Karen Giles-Smith*

**D**etox diets are back in vogue, due to the efforts of the diet industry, supplement makers and celebrity converts such as *Gwyneth Paltrow, Oprah and Beyonce*.

You may have heard that Beyonce followed a detox diet to slim down for her role in *Dreamgirls* and purportedly lost 20 pounds. But the story about her weight regain received less play.

Dissatisfied, Beyonce now warns fans away from detox diets.

Detox diets entice with reports of weight loss and ridding the body of toxins. With rising public concern about exposure to environmental chemicals, the manufacturers of detox diets use misperceptions, confusion and fears about toxins and health to help market their products.

## The detox diet dogma is based on the *belief* that:

- People are constantly exposed to toxins from many sources such as pesticides, air pollutants, alcohol, caffeine, food additives, sugar, and impurities in water.
- The body holds onto these toxins which can cause problems such as fatigue, headaches, nausea and chronic diseases.
- A detox regimen will clear toxins from the body, thereby preventing and curing health problems.

Proponents claim that occasional use of detox diets will clear toxins from the digestive, lymph or gastrointestinal system as well as from the skin and hair, thereby offering greater energy, freedom from headaches, weight loss and prevention of chronic diseases.

### The Process

Popular detox diets include the *Master Cleanse, Lemonade Diet, Fat Flush Diet, Liver Cleansing Diet, Martha's Vinyard Detox Diet, and Raw Food Diet*.

Detox diets last about 7-10 days. In general, they incorporate fasting or purging by banning certain foods such as animal products, caffeine, sugar and alcohol. Often, a liquid diet is directed which is followed by the reintroduction of certain foods such as brown rice, fruits and vegetables. Detox diets may include a "cleansing" concoction such as an herb blend or a mixture of ingredients such as water, maple syrup, lemon juice and cayenne pepper. Some detox regimens also involve colonic irrigation (*an enema*).

### The Reality

Most medical experts believe that detox diets are worthless and can be dangerous. According to Michael Picco, MD, Mayo Clinic gastroenterologist, there is no evidence that detox diets remove toxins from the body or have any health benefits. The fact is, the body does a fine job of detoxifying itself. Natural bacteria in the colon detoxify food wastes, the liver neutralizes toxins, mucus membranes in the colon keep unwanted substances from



reentering the blood and tissues, and the colon sheds old cells about every three days which prevents buildup of harmful material.

There is no evidence that detox diets enhance the body's natural detoxification processes. Detox diets are just another quick weight loss scheme. Weight loss that occurs during a detox

regimen is due to fluid and muscle loss. Once it's over, weight is regained.

**The Dangers**

Some detox diets include herbs and other dietary supplements, laxatives or colonic irrigation. Dietary supplements are not regulated by the FDA. Although these ingredients may be "natural," it

doesn't mean they're healthy or safe.

Laxative abuse can cause severe dehydration and heart or colon damage. Colonic irrigation can cause bowel perforation or infection.

Detox diets are particularly dangerous for those with diabetes, low blood sugar, an eating disorder, heart condition, or any chronic condition. Also, detox diets are not appropriate for children, teens, seniors, pregnant or breastfeeding women.

**The Bottom Line**

Some components of detox diets make sense: drinking more water, eating more whole foods such as fruits and vegetables, consuming less alcohol and caffeine, and eating less fat, animal products and processed foods.

Although it lacks the appeal of a "quick fix," the old-fashioned approach of eating right, staying hydrated, being physically active and getting enough sleep is the best way to support health, including the body's natural defenses against toxins.

*Karen Giles-Smith, MS, RD, is a registered dietitian and freelance writer based in Mason, Michigan. Visit her Web site and blog at [www.TheWellness-Writer.com](http://www.TheWellness-Writer.com)*

# Laser Hair and Skin Care

**AT LAKE LANSING FAMILY PRACTICE**

**A night of beauty ...  
... and you're invited!**

From 6 to 8 p.m. March 11 join us at Lake Lansing Family Practice for a night of pampering and relaxation. We'll introduce a new skin care line, and give visitors a chance to learn about all of the non-surgical anti-aging procedures we offer. Call Cheryl at 517.913.3980 to register



1568 Lake Lansing Rd.  
Lansing, MI 48912  
[lakelansingdoctors.com](http://lakelansingdoctors.com)  
Across from Court One

**GIFT  
CERTIFICATES  
AVAILABLE!**

**(517) 913-3980**

See our pricing at [lakelansingdoctors.com](http://lakelansingdoctors.com)

**This month's special: Get ready for spring break with \$100 off on any hair removal service of five (5) or more treatments. Please bring this ad in to qualify.**