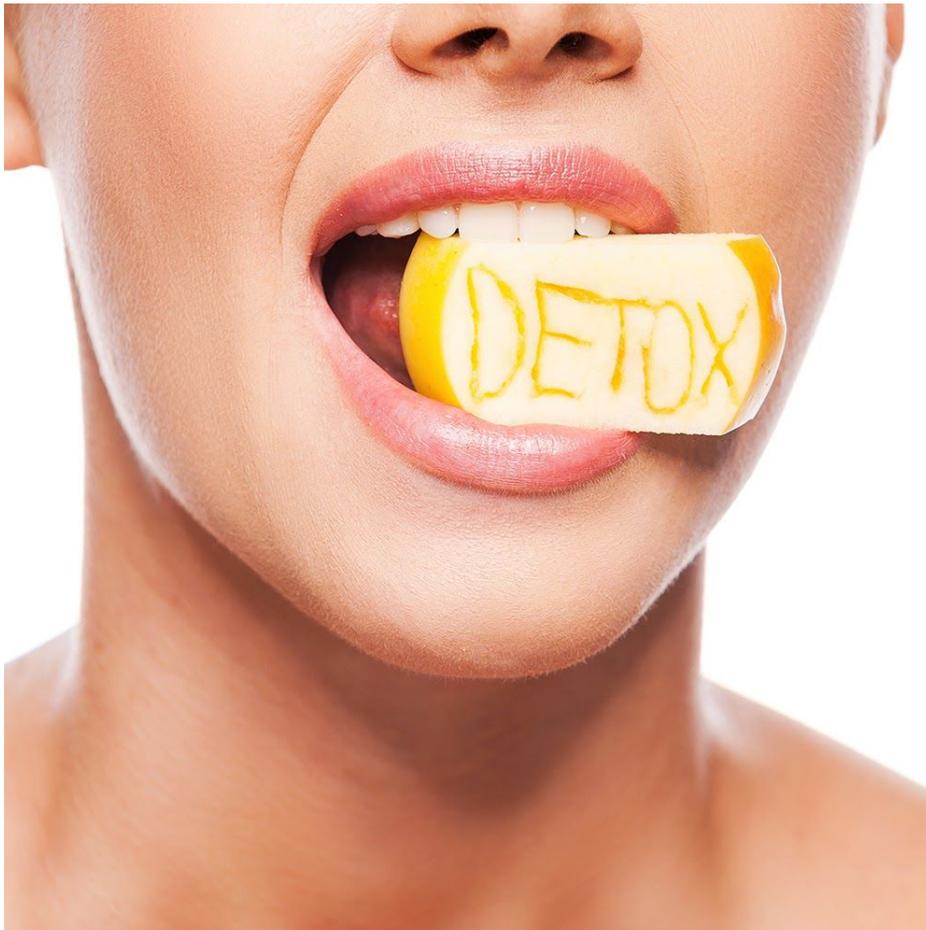


# SHAPE

## Detox Myths Dietitians Wish You Would Stop Believing

By Jessica Cording, MS, RD, CDN December 21, 2016



### **Myth: Detoxes Are an Effective Way to Lose Weight**

Sure, you'll drop a few pounds if you deny yourself food, but it's nearly all water, says Angie Asche, M.S., R.D., L.M.N.T., owner of [Eeat Sports Nutrition](#), adding that prolonged low-calorie plans can damage your metabolism. "Fasting for too long can significantly slow down your metabolic rate, making it even more difficult to keep the weight off," she says. Plus, "detox diets are

often devoid of protein, which means you'll lose muscle mass while cleansing," says Lauren Harris-Pincus, M.S., R.D.N., owner of [Nutrition Starring YOU](#). "When the weight creeps back on, and it *will*, most of the weight regained will be fat. In the end, you'll be worse off than when you started."

See: [Healthy Ways to "Detox" Your Body](#)



## **Myth: Cleanses Reset Your System**

Nazima Qureshi, R.D., M.P.H., of [Nutrition by Nazima](#), wishes people would stop believing that they need to go on a "cleanser" where they only consume specific foods such as juices or lemon water in order to "reset their system." It makes more sense to follow a sustainable approach that gives the body the nutrients it needs to do what it's designed to do. "An overall healthy diet," she says, "in combination with fully functioning kidneys and liver, will help our bodies stay healthy inside and out. No magic potion required!"

Related: [Is a Detox Diet Right for You?](#)



## **Myth: A Detox Will Help Certain Health Conditions**

Dietitian Kristen Smith, M.S., R.D., founder of [360FamilyNutrition](#), is concerned by claims that a detox can treat certain conditions. "There is no research to support going on a detox to improve conditions such as high blood pressure or diabetes. In fact, going on a detox could cause someone with diabetes to develop extremely low blood sugar, which could be dangerous."



## **Myth: Activated Charcoal Helps You Detox**

Activated charcoal is another thing many dietitians agree [may do more harm than good](#). This trend has become popular for its supposed ability to help remove toxins from your digestive tract—an idea that came from its use in emergency medicine to treat acute poisoning. So what about claims that it can detox the body from alcohol and junk food? "Studies show activated charcoal doesn't help detox from alcohol, and it can make medications and supplements less effective," Christy Brissette, M.S., R.D., of [80 Twenty Nutrition](#). "It's not selective about what it blocks from being absorbed, so taking activated charcoal could make you absorb fewer nutrients from your food and juices."



## **Myth: Juice Cleanses Help You Lose Weight**

Dietitian [Thérèse Baran Bonanni, M.S., R.D.N.](#) wishes clients would give up juice cleanses for good. The lack of fiber, she explains, can wreak havoc on your blood sugar and mood. "One of the great benefits of fiber is not only regularity but satiety. Juices extract that valuable fiber and usually lack filling fat and protein to boot, leaving you 'hangry' from the blood sugar crash, and running to the bathroom!" (See: [Your Non-Juice Detox: 7-Day Clean Eating Plan](#)).

Jessica Spiro, R.D., owner of [Jessica Spiro Nutrition](#), adds, "I wish people would stop believing that our digestive systems need to 'rest' in order to function properly." She also takes issue with the idea that the way to reset the gut is by

following a restrictive diet of juices, soups, or shakes. "Most detoxes do the opposite by putting more stress on our organs, which try to compensate when not receiving the most basic nutrients," she says.



## **Myth: Laxatives Are a Safe Way to Cleanse Your System**

While they do have their place in treating severe constipation, dietitian [Rebecca Clyde M.S., R.D.N.](#) warns that laxatives are *not* appropriate for use as a detoxifying or cleansing tool. She points out that using laxatives to cleanse or lose weight is considered bulimia and should be a red flag to practitioners. "If you think that a loved one is suffering from an eating disorder and you feel as though you need to approach them, make sure you are prepared with

what you are going to say," says Courtney Darsa, R.D., C.D.N., a dietitian with [Laura Cipullo Whole Nutrition Services](#). She recommends doing so in a caring, private environment.



## **Myth: You Need to Detox at All**

Save your money! Dietitian Charlene Pors of [Euphoria Nutrition](#) says, "I wish people would stop believing they need to spend hundreds of dollars a month to detox and rid their body of toxins. Nowadays there are so many different products on the market from powders to liquids that claim to be necessary to cleanse our bodies. Not only are these products a huge waste of money, but they can also be very harmful, and some of the ingredients could interact with common medications." Kaleigh McMordie, M.C.N., R.D.N., of [Lively Table](#), adds, "Our bodies were amazingly designed to rid themselves of any true

toxins we come across, and unless you've got organ failure, your body doesn't need help detoxing!"

Dietitian [Melissa Rifkin](#) cautions, "Detoxing can result in weight gain given the restrictive nutrient intake, it can disturb normal bowel function, produce increased flatulence, cause headaches, lethargy, and weakness, and deplete our bodies of essential micro and macronutrients needs. Save money, calories, and time by eating a balanced diet rich in whole grains, fruit, vegetables, protein, and healthy fats for the most sustainable cleanse. Hydrate 64 ounces at least each day with lemon water which does a terrific job of 'cleansing.'"