

# MINUTE NUTRITION NEWS

May 2014

## Do Cleanses and Detox Diets Really Work?

Many products and diets in the market claim to improve health by cleansing and detoxifying the body and its organs. Some even claim to help with weight loss. The ways to achieve these benefits can vary from fasting to eating a strict diet of certain foods or herbal supplements. This issue will explain the research behind these claims and help you understand whether cleanses and detox diets really work for you.

### Claim #1:

***“Cleansing and detox can help rid the intestines of toxins that build up from our feces.”***

#### *What's the evidence?*

Cleansing or detoxifying our bowels is not necessary and not recommended. The human digestive system

naturally gets rid of toxins and feces that build up in our intestines. The black material that is often seen in the stools after a cleanse has been found to be from the fibres or herbal products rather than “old fecal matter or toxins” as claimed by the cleanses. A simple way to maintain regular bowel movements to remove toxins is to eat a high-fibre diet full of whole grains, legumes, vegetables and fruit.



### Claim #3:

***“Cleansing and detox can help the body function better and lose weight more efficiently”***

#### *What's the evidence?*

Cleansing and detox does not likely lead to real weight loss - that is, losing fat from our body. Instead, any weight loss

from cleansing rituals is likely caused by water loss, which may lead to health risks including dehydration and electrolyte imbalances. Weight loss also does not typically happen with more bowel movements because calories are absorbed before reaching the colon where the “cleansing” takes place. Research still shows that the key to long-term weight loss is decreased calorie intake, behaviour change (such as keeping a food diary) and physical activity.

### Claim #2:

***“Vegetable and/or fruit juices can help cleanse and detoxify the liver.”***

#### *What's the evidence?*

There is a small amount of research that shows that certain types of vegetables (see next page) and fruits can

affect the detoxification system in our liver. However, these foods do not need to be juiced nor do they need to be eaten as a restrictive diet to take effect. Juices compared to whole foods have less fibre and do not benefit bowel health. Restrictive diets can also lead to nutrient deficiencies, low energy and fatigue, low blood sugar or blood pressure, dizziness and nausea. Eat a variety of colourful vegetables and fruit for their antioxidants to help support the body's natural detox system, while eating a balanced diet with whole grains, protein and dairy.

### Claim #4:

***“Cleansing and detox with herbal products or supplements are generally safe.”***

#### *What's the evidence?*

Herbal products are often seen as “natural” and therefore, generally safe. However, herbal products often have medicinal

effects in our body that is not fully understood by existing research. This is especially dangerous for folks who take prescribed medication or other supplements in which the herbal products can potentially interact with. The interaction could change how the medications or supplements are supposed to take effect in the body.

# RECIPE OF THE MONTH

May 2014

## Broccoli with Balsamic Dressing

Vegetables in the cabbage family have been found to contain compounds that support our liver's natural detox system. These vegetables include cabbage, broccoli and cauliflower. You can eat more of these vegetables by having them as a snack with a dip, or cooking them as a side for your evening meals. The strong flavour of this recipe is a great side dish for meals with lighter flavours.



Makes 2 servings (2 cups of broccoli)

### Ingredients:

2 cloves	vegetable oil spray
1 tbsp	garlic, minced
1 tsp	balsamic vinegar
½ tsp	reduced sodium soy sauce
2 cups	sugar
	broccoli florets

### Directions:

1. In a small pan, lightly spray with vegetable oil over medium high heat.



2. Add half the minced garlic, then broccoli. Stir. Add water until bottom of the pan is covered completely with water.



3. Cover and cook for 2-3 minutes or until broccoli is tender and bright green in colour. Strain out remaining water and set broccoli aside.



Tip: If the water runs out before your broccoli is ready, add more. If not, you will burn the bottom of your pan!

4. Dry pan and re-spray with vegetable oil over medium low heat. Add remaining garlic.



5. Add vinegar, soy sauce and sugar. Reduce heat to low. Continue to stir while simmering until thickened into a syrup, about 2-3 minutes.



6. Drizzle dressing over broccoli and serve.

