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Wise Notes for Consumers

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Detoxing with a Balanced Diet

From time to time I hear someone mention that they have either fasted or gone on a restricted diet to “detox” — and, of course, to lose a lot of weight relatively quickly. The following article from Ohio State University provides useful information to help us understand how a balanced diet can ensure that our body systems will take care of the detox.

Any diet that promises a quick fix, encourages a severe restriction of calories, advises you to eat only certain foods or requires that foods be eaten only in specific combinations screams “fad diet”. Detox diets claim to “detoxify” the body, allowing toxins and contaminants that have accumulated over time to flush out. You can find many versions of the detox diet, but they usually start with a very low calorie fast followed by drinking juice and eating small amounts of fresh produce.

The body already has some perfectly good systems in place to detoxify the body. They’re called the liver, the kidneys and the colon. Although supporters of detox diets disagree, there’s no evidence to support the idea that those systems need a substantial restriction of food and calories to help them remove harmful substances from the body.

Some people claim the detox diet helps them feel healthier and more energetic. There could be several explanations for this. Their normal diet might be heavy in saturated fats, refined grains and heavily processed foods. Taking a break from those foods would certainly make your body feel different. Eating fruits and vegetables after severely restricting food intake for an extended period might also make someone feel better. But putting yourself on any very low calorie diet has its downsides. One is that you may lose muscle, which would cause your metabolism to dip and make it easier to gain weight.

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Instead of detox or other fad diets, nutritionists recommend eating a balanced diet centered on lean proteins, vegetables and whole fruits, whole grains, and a modest amount of healthy (unsaturated) fats. Also, don't skip meals, especially breakfast, and limit portions to a sensible size. To contribute to a balanced diet, try the following recipe idea for Cucumber, Corn and Bean Salsa.

Cucumber, Corn, and Bean Salsa

Ingredients:

2-3 large cucumbers
2 tomatoes
1 yellow bell pepper
1 small red onion
¼ cup chopped fresh cilantro
½ cup black beans
½ cup fresh whole kernel corn, cooked
1 ounce package dry ranch dressing mix
1/8 cup cider vinegar
2 tablespoons sugar, optional

Yield: Makes 20, ½ cup servings

Directions: Wash all vegetables. Finely chop cucumbers, tomatoes, pepper, and onion. Combine in a large mixing bowl with chopped cilantro. Drain and rinse beans and add to chopped vegetables. Add corn. If using canned corn instead of fresh, drain off liquid prior to adding to vegetables. In a small bowl, mix together ranch dressing packet, vinegar, and sugar. Pour dressing over vegetables and mix well. Serve immediately or refrigerate until chilled.

Nutritional Analysis: 50 calories, 0 g fat, 130 mg sodium, 7 g carbohydrates, 2 g fiber, 70% Daily Value of vitamin C, 6% Daily Value of vitamin A.

Finally, if you are thinking of making drastic changes to your diet, it's always a good idea to talk with your doctor first. For additional information on tips for consuming a balanced diet, contact the Extension office at 940/627-3341.

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