

PRINT-Cleaning up the facts about juice cleanses

TikTok is full of videos from influencers and others touting the benefits of various juice cleanses. For better or worse, the share of adults who regularly get news from TikTok has grown about fivefold since 2020 and for adults under 30, nearly 40% get their news on the social media platform.

So, there are a lot of people who could be convinced to do a juice cleanse from their exposure to those messages. Is that a bad thing? A juice cleanse involves consuming only fruit and vegetable juices for between three and seven days. OSF HealthCare gastroenterologist Omar Khokhar, MD, says the research isn't there yet for him to recommend tackling a juice cleanse to reset your gut health.

One of the biggest claims you hear on Tik Tok is that a juice cleanse can remove toxins from your body. Dr. Khokhar says there's no data to support that.

"I don't know of any data that shows that a juice cleanse will preemptively remove toxins. That being said, if you reduce the amount of overall chemicals or ingredients that you're ingesting, you may have less toxins going in and thereby being metabolized and then excreted."

The [Food and Drug Administration \(FDA\) warns](#) that some detox/cleansing products may contain illegal or potentially harmful ingredients, are marketed using false health claims, and could be harmful for people with some health conditions, such as diabetes. They also rarely lead to permanent weight loss.

Instead of a juice cleanse, Dr. Khokhar says the best approach to improving gut health is to improve what you're ingesting every day.

"Eat on the outside of the grocery store. We talk about produce, meat, seafood, and if you can tolerate it, dairy. The other way to look at it is – and I do this very frequently in our clinic for patients who have heartburn, diarrhea, constipation – I'll tell them, 'Give me three days. Don't eat anything out of a wrapper, box, or a can.'"

Eat more fiber

Most people need more soluble and insoluble fiber in their diet. Soluble fiber is found in apples, bananas, oats, peas, beans, avocados, and citrus fruits. Insoluble fiber is in whole wheat flour, bran, nuts, seeds, and the skins of many fruits and vegetables. Dr. Khokhar says both are critical to improving digestive health.

"The trick with the GI tract is to keep things moving. When things stagnate, that's when your GI gut microbiome can replicate in the wrong way. It's when you get constipation, and you get diverticulosis, and you get bloating. So, it's all about keeping things moving."

While some juices have antioxidants which can help protect cells from damage, reduce inflammation, and lower the risk of chronic diseases, they are also high in sugar and some, including grapefruit juice, can have a bad interaction or interfere with absorption of certain medications. So, Dr. Khokhar says it's really important to consult your primary care provider before starting any cleanse. He also recommends limiting a juice cleanse to 72 hours.

Drink more water

Staying hydrated can also go a long way in keeping your intestinal tract healthy. Dr. Khokhar also says the body has its own system of flushing the digestive system. He explains there is something called a migrating motor complex, or MMC for short, that creates a soft tidal wave through your GI tract every two to three hours.

"That's because it's important to replenish and recycle bacteria in the gut microbiome that often, and so if you change what you're putting into your system, it will affect the composition of that system," Dr. Khokhar stresses.

Whether that's a good or bad influence and what that means for our health is unclear and Dr. Khokhar suggests that's the next exciting frontier of GI research. However, Dr. Khokhar returns to his theme that focusing on putting less processed food into your body on a regular basis will go a longer way than a juice cleanse to improve your gut microbiome and reduce gastrointestinal issues.