Chow Line

News from the College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences

A tried-and-true DIY 'detox' diet

I've seen a lot of different versions of "detox" diets. Which type might work best to help me shed a few pounds this spring?

"Detox" and similar diets have been around for ages. As early as the 1930s, the grapefruit diet promised quick weight loss because of some sort of fat-burning enzymes, which simply don't exist.

Today, many detox diets focus on juicing or eliminating entire food groups and promise to help you burn fat, boost metabolism, improve digestion and (almost always) lose weight. However, there seems to be no consensus about what a detox diet really consists of, or what it is that you need to detoxify out of your body that your liver, kidney and colon don't already eliminate.

That said, spring is always a good time to recharge your diet. And if you want to drop a few pounds, why not do so in a way that's sustainable over time and avoid a yo-yo pattern of weight loss and gain? Start with these guidelines:

- Eat two fruits a day — the equivalent of 1 to 2 cups total. Be sure to eat a wide variety, not only to keep your diet interesting but so you reap the benefits of a range of different types of produce. Try strawberries, blueberries, raspberries, cherries, honeydew, pineapple, mango, oranges, grapes or any other fruit. Frozen and canned fruit also count. To lose weight, limit how much juice and dried fruit you eat, such as raisins or prunes, because they pack a lot of calories in a small amount and won't fill you up. In fact, if you choose to eat dried fruit, count it double (a quarter-cup equals a half-cup of fruit for the day).

- Eat 2.5 cups of vegetables or more each day. Again, choose a wide variety. Over the course of a week, be sure to include dark

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green vegetables, such as broccoli, spinach, kale, collard or other greens; red and orange vegetables including red peppers, carrots, tomatoes, pumpkin and winter squash; beans, such as black beans, pinto beans and kidney beans; and other vegetables, such as cabbage, cauliflower, green beans and zucchini. Limit starchy vegetables such as potatoes, green peas and corn. When eating raw leafy greens, double the amount: Eat 2 cups and count them as 1 cup.

- Limit refined grains, such as bread, rice and pasta, to 2 to 3 ounces a day, and enjoy an additional 2 to 3 ounces of whole grains. An "ounce" in this case is equal to one slice of bread, half an English muffin, a half-cup of oatmeal, 1 cup of breakfast cereal, a half-cup of rice or pasta, or one 6-inch tortilla.

- Enjoy 3 to 5.5 ounces of protein per day, including poultry, seafood, lean beef, nuts and eggs (1 egg is equal to one ounce of protein).

- Eat 2.5 to 3 cups of lowfat or nonfat dairy a day, including milk, yogurt and cheese.

- Choose healthy oils, such as olive oil, and limit to 1 to 2 tablespoons a day.

This plan might look familiar: It's the plan recommended by the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. Get more details at www.choosemyplate.gov.

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