



Can a detox diet safely help me lose weight?

—Jade Nelson, Perth, Australia

I hate to be the one to break it to you, but no. A detox diet, whether it's all-liquid or based on supplements or allows just a few foods, is a fancy name for a crash diet, which according to a December 2010 study in the *Journal of Neuroscience* can raise stress hormones and make you more likely to binge later. You may feel lighter and less bloated because the detox evacuates your gastrointestinal system. But this can lead to dehydration—and the weight lost is mostly water. When you return to your usual habits, you'll likely gain back those pounds.

Here's another myth busted: a detox regimen doesn't remove toxins from your body. This theory is not supported by science. Your liver and kidneys already naturally eliminate toxins from the blood.

However, detoxes can be good for your psyche. "It brings optimism to people," says Christine Gerbstadt, M.D., R.D., author of *Doctor's Detox Diet* (2011). "They deliver fast results and people want to be successful when they're sacrificing something." You can get the benefits of "detoxing" safely: "Eat three small meals—liquid or not—plus a couple pieces of fruit for snacks," says Gerbstadt. Essentially, limit calories and make sure they come from nutrient-rich foods. Pick a calorie level that gives you enough energy to be physically active—at least 1,200 or 1,500. You'll safely kick-start weight loss and gain confidence to stick to a healthy eating and exercise regimen.

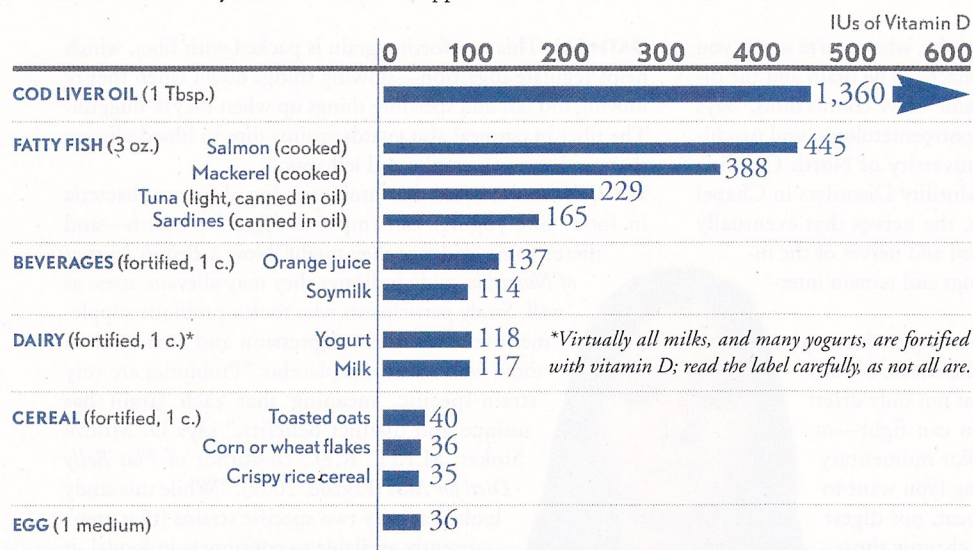
Send Nutrition Editor Brierley Wright, M.S., R.D., nutrition questions at eatingwell.com/go/askus.

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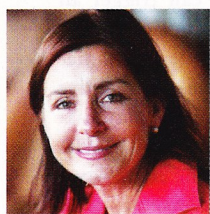
Are You Getting Enough Vitamin D?

Vitamin D is practically a super-nutrient: it's touted for helping to strengthen bones, lower the risk of cancer, depression and heart disease and even promote weight loss. The Institute of Medicine recently upped the daily recommended amount (for ages 9 to 70) to 600 International Units (IUs)—and because there are not many D-rich foods, it's important to know how they stack up. If your diet is D-ficient, check with your doctor about a supplement. —Patricia Bannan, M.S., R.D.



*Virtually all milks, and many yogurts, are fortified with vitamin D; read the label carefully, as not all are.

| EXPERT ADVICE |



Cheryl Forberg, R.D., is a James Beard Award-winning author, the nutritionist for NBC's *The Biggest Loser* and author of *Positively Ageless: A 28-Day Plan for a Younger, Slimmer, Sexier You* (Rodale, 2008).

Train Your (Aging) Brain

The right foods *can* keep your brain young. Start with these colorful veggies. **CARROTS FOR MEMORY.** Carrots—along with bell peppers, celery, rosemary and thyme—contain luteolin, a flavonoid believed to reduce inflammation that can lead to cognitive decline. In a study published in the October 2010 issue of *The Journal of Nutrition*, mice that ate a diet that included luteolin had better spatial memory (e.g., how quickly they found a platform in a water maze) and less inflammation than mice who didn't get any luteolin.

BEETS TO BEAT DEMENTIA. Beets, plus cabbages and radishes, are rich in naturally occurring nitrates—which, unlike unhealthy artificial nitrates found in processed meat, may be beneficial. In a study published in the January 2011 issue of the journal *Nitric Oxide*, older adults who ate a nitrate-rich diet got a boost in blood flow to the frontal lobe of their brains—an area commonly associated with dementia. Poor blood flow contributes to

age-related cognitive decline. Scientists think that the nitrates' nitric oxide, a compound that keeps blood vessels supple, helps increase brain blood flow.

THINK QUICKLY WITH ASPARAGUS. Like leafy greens, this vegetable delivers folate, which works with vitamin B₁₂ (in fish, poultry and meat) to help prevent cognitive impairment. In a study from Tufts University, older adults with healthy levels of folate and B₁₂ performed better on a test of speed and mental flexibility. If you're 50-plus, be sure you're getting enough B₁₂: your ability to absorb it decreases with age.

