

## A Guide to Common Cleanses

**Cleansing fans say a few all-juice days can boost energy, help with weight loss and more — but some experts think the cleanse trend can damage your health.**

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Drinking fresh veggie or fruit juice hardly seems like an eyebrow raiser, but few diet plans are more controversial than cleanses. These three- to five-day programs are all the rage among dieters with new prebottled juice cleanse systems seemingly popping up every day to satisfy the demand.

Proponents say a juice cleanse can purify your body, remove toxins, and kick-start your [weight-loss efforts](#), but many health professionals say that's nonsense.

"Cleanses can be helpful or harmful, depending on the type of cleanse and how aggressive it is," says Gregory L. Jantz, PhD, a mental health expert and certified eating disorder specialist. "Done properly,

they are an excellent way to improve focus, energy, and mood." Jantz adds that a healthy cleanse involves getting plenty of nutrients through fruit and vegetable juice, not depriving your body of calories by fasting.

But other experts don't see cleanses as necessary. "In otherwise healthy people, there is no evidence that cleansing or detoxification has any benefit," says Thomas Schnell, MD, a gastroenterologist at Loyola University Medical Center in Illinois. "The human system is designed to clean itself out without interference. Fiber, which is absent in an all-juice diet, is what keeps the bowels moving." Most American diets are low in fiber and eating less meat and more fiber through fruits and vegetables is a healthy diet step, Schnell says. However, the idea that your colon needs cleansing is just not true for most people.

If you're still tempted to try a juice cleanse, here's a look what you should consider before jumping in and an overview of some of the most popular cleanse systems.

### **Are You Healthy Enough for a Juice Cleanse?**

Although a cleanse might not have much inherent value, Schnell says, drinking juice for a few days, alternating a day of juice with a day of meals, or replacing some meals with juice to achieve weight loss isn't necessarily dangerous if you're in good health. "Most people who do not have a preexisting serious health condition, such as diabetes, colitis, or [Crohn's disease](#), will probably be able to complete a one- to three-day juice fast without problems," Schnell says. "Potential concerns would be maintaining adequate hydration and knowing what, exactly, are the ingredients in the juices. Pure fruits and vegetables in the short run are all right for healthy people, but diabetics, for example, may have challenges identifying starches and sugars and therefore controlling their blood sugar."

### **More Cons Than Pros: The Shortcomings of Cleanses**

A short juice cleanse might not pose an immediate danger to most people, but going all-juice might have more subtle risks, experts warn. "This type of diet is like shock treatment to the body," says Meredith Luce, RD, a nutrition consultant with the Rosen Medical Center in Florida. "By eating one day and fasting the next, you stimulate the body's starvation response. When you do eat again, your body hoards calories, making long-term weight loss more difficult." Another problem Luce notes is that dietary cleanses don't instill [healthy eating habits](#). "Cleanses of this type allow people to justify bad behavior," she says. "In other words, 'I'll eat and drink whatever I want this week, because I'm doing a cleanse next week.' Cleanses promote the mentality of a quick fix as opposed to long-term balance."

### **The Master Cleanse**

It's been around for more than 70 years, and recent use by stars such as singer Beyoncé have reaffirmed [Master Cleanse](#) is one of the most popular — and most controversial — cleanses. Essentially a fast, Master Cleanse live on a drink made from lemon juice, maple syrup, and cayenne pepper for 10 days, or as long as they can take it. Jantz says that weight-loss fasts this extreme are simply not healthy. "It is not necessary to fast to do any toxin removal," he says. "In fact, the amino acids found in protein are critical to helping the liver to process toxins. When the body is in a state of starvation, metabolism slows down." That means you'll still feel hungry post-cleanse, but your metabolism will have slowed. "That is why people gain extra weight back after a very restricted diet plan," Jantz explains. "There is no way around this."

## The BluePrint Cleanse

One of the most popular bottled cleanses today is the [BluePrint Cleanse](#), which offers different juice options depending on how often you use cleanse systems. The standard Renovation Cleanse (recommended for beginners) has six daily juices for a total of about 1,070 calories. If you're not ready to go all-juice, BluePrint also offers the Juice 'Til Dinner plan. On this diet, you'll drink fresh juices all day, and have a dinner of a salad or another raw-food meal, along with two snacks. Jantz says that this food-and-juice cleanse is a healthier option because you're not starving yourself completely. But J.J. Virgin, a nutrition expert in California, points out that it still has drawbacks. "With the exception of the cashew milk, all of the juices have just 1 to 2 grams of protein but as much as 10 teaspoons of [fruit sugar](#). With all that sugar and almost no protein or fat, you'll crash, feeling lethargic and hungry a few hours after you drink the juice."

[The Ritual Cleanse](#) is another all fruit and vegetable plan similar to BluePrint, though Ritual's classic cleanse adds up to only 814 daily calories. On this plan, you consume six seasonal juices a day, as well as two pre- and post-workout drinks if you want to break a sweat while you cleanse.

## Cooler Cleanse

This celebrity-backed juice cleanse (Salma Hayek is a company co-founder) can't be beat when it comes to convenience. After you can choose either the three- or five-day plan, everything is delivered right to your door, nationwide. But Jackie Newgent, RD, a dietitian and author of the *Big Green Cookbook*, says that relying exclusively on juice can cause problems with overall [nutrition](#). "Though a natural fruit-based juice cleanse may offer some people a 'mental' kick start for following a diet without harm, I don't recommend the use of cleanses," she says. "Cleanses have never been necessary to jump-start weight loss or remove 'toxins,' and they never will be necessary."

## Organic Avenue

[Organic Avenue](#) sells vegetable and fruit juice cleanses that can be customized based on duration and whether you want to combine food and juice cleanses. Here again, experts are concerned that this type of cleanse deprives dieters of [essential nutrients](#), such as fiber or protein. "Juiced fruits and veggies can provide an easy way to help you meet your daily produce needs," Newgent says. "Enjoy them as part of a meal or as a snack, but not as a meal replacement," she advises.

## Alternative-Day Water Fasts

Instead of consuming nutrient-rich fruit and vegetable juices, alternative-day water fasts promote consuming only water every other day. Jantz says this is not a good idea for weight loss. “Eliminating all protein and [carbohydrates](#) from the diet will result in a catabolic state where the body has to break down muscle mass in addition to fat in order to provide ketones to the brain to continue to function,” he says. “If you don’t want to slow your metabolism down and decrease your muscle mass, then I wouldn’t do a water-only fast.”

## Juicing as a Meal Replacement

For a less-extreme cleanse, consider occasionally replacing a meal with fresh vegetable or fruit juice. “In moderation, or as an alternative to eating fruits and veggies, this can be a great way to supplement your [meals and snacks](#),” Jantz says. “Juicing is a great way to concentrate the phytochemicals and nutrients found in veggies and fruits.” When you do it on your own at home, it’s also a lot less expensive than a prebottled system.

## Doctor-Assisted Cleanse

The bottom line is that a cleanse might seem innocent enough for speedy weight loss, but it can have serious consequences for your health and [metabolism](#), especially if you have any medical conditions. If you’re really interested in trying a cleanse, get your doctor’s go-ahead and guidance, so you can reap the benefits of fruits and vegetables without putting your health at risk.

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