

11 Healthy Ways to Detox



Put a Stop to Your Health and Diet Vices

We're all looking to turn over a new leaf when it comes to our health, but going overboard with rigid resolutions or impossible regimens isn't going to net you lasting results. Instead, try these expert tips on how to really stop succumbing to some of your worst vices, whether you're hooked on sweets, junk food, late nights, or even harsh skin scrubs.

Artificial Sweeteners

Think artificial sweeteners are a diet "do" because they contain no calories or sugar? Think again. Studies suggest that regular consumption of artificial sweeteners like aspartame (found in diet sodas) may actually lead to weight gain, says Rachel Beller, RD, founder of the Beller Nutritional Institute. It turns out they can trigger our bodies to crave sweets and sugar. Beller advises cutting back gradually: "If you were using three packets in a cup of tea or coffee, for two weeks cut down to two packets, then cut down to just one packet for the next couple of weeks, and then only half a packet." Once you've retrained your taste buds, the next move should be a switch to a natural sweetener such as stevia or coconut crystals.



Skipping Meals

"Skipping meals may seem productive as a weight-loss solution, but in reality it is a major cause of weight gain," says Beller. She warns that doing so will slow down your metabolism and make you firmly believe the world "owes you food." The result? You'll end up consuming way more calories than you would have if you weren't so famished in the first place. Make regular eating a habit by keeping your fridge and pantry stocked with healthy fixings like yogurt, peanut butter, and whole wheat bread or wraps for quick and easy meals.



Skimping on Sleep

Although good sleep hygiene is as important as regular

[exercise](#)

and a healthy diet, it often gets shorted in our hyper-driven society. Poor sleep is a big cause of ill health in our culture, according to Daphne Miller, MD, family physician and author of *The Jungle Effect: A Doctor Discovers the Healthiest Diets from Around the World -- Why They Work and How to Bring Them Home*. Her advice? "Consider a sleep reboot where you eliminate caffeine and alcohol, have a regular bedtime, avoid late meals, and ban TV, computer, and smartphone screens for at least two hours before bedtime."

[Your zzz's are important -- check out these stats to see why!](#)



Mindless Snacking

Whether it's at your office desk, in your kitchen with the fridge open, or in front of the TV, chances are you're in the habit of thinking that those random, unplanned mouthfuls don't really count. A little nibble here and there couldn't possibly get in the way of your weight-loss goals, right? Wrong. According to Beller, snacks should be wholesome and calculated. "Try not to have big bowls of snacks readily available, as your hand will naturally gravitate in that direction." Another tip? "Brush and floss after each meal or healthy snack -- it will discourage you from eating more," says Beller.



Relying on Supplements

Go back to basics when it comes to getting your vitamins. "Too often I have first-time patients come in to my office and line my desk with supplements. The problem is that they take supplements instead of protecting their bodies with whole foods," says Beller. Instead of blowing your money on expensive vitamins and other miracle drugs, build your meals using a colorful range of antioxidant-rich vegetables and fruits. "Research has shown us that the absorption of antioxidants from foods is by far superior to what we get in supplement form," Beller notes. Any vitamins you take should be considered extra insurance.

[Are you taking the right vitamins? Use this quiz to find out](#)



Slacking on Exercise

Starting an

[exercise](#)

routine can be overwhelming, especially if you don't really love to sweat, or you're too busy dealing with everything else in your life. Miller says you'll have a lot more success slotting movement into your current lifestyle rather than trying to totally reformat your day-to-day to accommodate exercise. "Exercise can work like a savings account -- make little deposits throughout the day. Get creative: Take the stairs, do five-minute power

[yoga](#)

sessions (even in your work clothes), do

[squats](#)

while you're talking on the phone, park a half-mile away from your destination and then walk, or better yet, don't drive at all," suggests Miller.

[10 more ways to squeeze in a quickie workout no matter how busy you are](#)



An Insatiable Sweet Tooth

Sometimes you really just have to have something sweet. But instead of routinely reaching for a doughnut, cookie, or cupcake, Beller says to swap in a healthier alternative. "Recent research suggests that just a small amount of dark chocolate (with at least 70% cocoa content) helps curb both our sweet and salty cravings." Another option is to grab a piece of fruit; the natural sugars will nip the need for sweetness and curb your craving. Miller recommends adding cinnamon instead of sugar to foods, as it helps to control blood sugar while simultaneously satisfying a sweet tooth. Try sprinkling it on oatmeal or plain yogurt, or add a dash to your coffee.



Eating Too Much Fast Food

If you find yourself stuck in a fast-food situation, don't cave to the classic combos -- think fresh, not fried. "Get a double salad with grilled chicken and low-fat balsamic dressing on the side, and skip the calorie-dense add-ons," says Beller. Eating fast food isn't always cheaper, warns Beller. "Take the time to look around for real food, and you'll find lots of cheap ways to eat well on the run."

[Not a grocery store in sight? Steer clear of these fast-food calorie bombs no matter what](#)



Slurping Soda

One of the worst health habits, according to Beller, is sugary soda: "This is non-negotiable in my book. Every time you reach for a can of soda, envision yourself downing 10 teaspoons of sugar! Soda is basically liquid candy." For a caffeine boost, drink unsweetened iced tea. If it's the bubbles you crave, switch to fizzy water with a splash of unsweetened cranberry juice or a squeeze of lemon or orange. If it's hard to go cold turkey, systematically reduce your soda intake in small steps.



Getting Hooked on Cleanses

Don't fall for the idea that your body needs any additional cleansing -- our digestive systems are handling that just fine. "There is no evidence in favor of aggressive colon cleanses and enemas," says Miller. She does note, however, that many traditional cultures engage in modified fasts from time to time. "If you do these for a couple weeks spaced around the calendar year, they can help you control your weight and your cholesterol levels." To do your own modified fast, Miller says to consider eliminating all decadent foods -- like red meat, sweets, and alcohol -- for a time. In addition, adding fermented vegetables (like sauerkraut and kimchee) to your diet might also help rebalance the flora (good bacteria) in your intestine.



OD-ing on Beauty Products

Sometimes skin can benefit from a product detox too, says Miller. "A lot of the skin problems that I see are the result of too much shampooing, too much scrubbing and hot water, and too many creams, astringents, and other skin products." Give your skin a break and see how it responds. The natural oils that your skin produces might just be its best medicine. "If you have troubled skin, consider cutting down on scrubs and giving your skin a holiday from all your usual products. You just might discover that less is more."