

Webinar 6 Handout: **CLEANSING FOODS**

Cleanses are all the rage these days, but not all cleanses are created equal. There is no real definition of a “cleanse” -- it is interpreted many different ways by many different people. While I’m a fan of a good “cleanse” and think it’s important to free your body of harmful toxins and chemicals, three days of lemon juice and cayenne pepper is not the way to do it. My idea of a “cleanse” might be a little different than what most people would think of. I am not a fan of the traditional liquid cleanses you always hear about, but rather I am a true believer in cleansing with *real food*. Not only is it safer and more delicious, but real, clean foods will offer a whole mix of nutrients that will work together in the body to keep you nourished.

A real food cleanse is a great way to jumpstart weight loss *and* good behaviors. You’ll establish healthy habits by eating the right foods consistently through the day and you’ll be able to build on that foundation. True cleansing foods are full of fiber, antioxidants, and other nutrients that will help to free your body of impurities and maintain liver health (your liver is the main detoxifying organ, so it pays to keep it healthy). They also tend to be lower in calories and free of added sugar, added sodium, alcohol, processed foods and all other unwanted ingredients. Weight loss is another result of a cleanse which is always good to give you a little mental boost to keep you plugging away with that new Nutritious Life. Here are some of my favorite cleansing foods that will leave your body feeling fresh, healthy, and pure. Incorporate these foods into your clients’ meal plans.

Best Cleansing Foods

Artichokes are my go-to cleansing food. First of all, they contain plant compounds known as caffeoylquinic acids, which increase flow of bile, a fluid that helps digest fats. Artichokes can also be used to treat indigestion. One study showed that patients with indigestion who received artichoke leaf extract had improvement in symptoms and overall quality of life. In addition, they’re full of fiber and take a long time to eat, so they help reinforce the practice of slow, mindful eating.

Avocados are a source of glutathione, a compound that blocks the absorption of certain fats in the intestines that can cause oxidative damage. Glutathione is also essential for liver cleansing. Plus, avocados contain a little magnesium, which has also been shown to inhibit fat absorption and can treat hyperlipidemia (high levels of fat in the blood), and they’re packed with fiber to help keep you regular.

Beets contain betaine, a substance that promotes regeneration of liver cells and the flow of bile. Beets also have beneficial effects on fat metabolism. Betaine is a lipotrope—something that prevents or reduces accumulation of fat in the liver. It works by inhibiting an enzyme involved in lipogenesis (fat production). Research shows a highly significant negative association between markers of obesity (BMI, percent body fat and waist circumference) and betaine concentrations in the blood, meaning the higher the betaine, the lower the BMI. Betaine can also relieve oxidative stress and is essential for detoxification.

Broccoli supports detoxification enzymes in the liver (**cabbage, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts and kale** do as well). This unique group of vegetables (called crucifers) have glucosinolates, which are plant compounds that contain sulfur. Sulforaphane is one type of glucosinolate in broccoli that plays a role in cancer prevention - it helps specific detoxification enzymes that rid the body of chemical carcinogens and free radicals. This is especially helpful for minimizing free radical damage in the lungs - you can breathe easy about that! Another kind of glucosinolate in broccoli is glucobrassicin, which releases the detoxifying enzyme indole-3-carbinol (I3C).

Celery is a vegetable that is mostly comprised of water and therefore will help keep your body hydrated and your hunger levels at rest. Additionally, celery contains antioxidants that will help eliminate those “bad boys” (free radicals) roaming around inside your body causing damage. Celery also contains a flavanoid called luteolin. Researchers believe that this particular flavonoid may possess anti-cancer properties.

Cinnamon is chock full of antioxidant properties. It is believed to control blood sugar in people with diabetes, prevent ulcers, destroy fungal infections, soothe indigestion, ward off urinary tract infections, and fight tooth decay and gum disease. Furthermore, the scent of cinnamon is linked to curbing fatigue, easing frustration and increasing alertness.

Dandelion root increases flow of bile, making digestion a speedier and more efficient process. It's also known to have diuretic properties that help you rid excess fluid in your body, which helps to flush you out and decrease bloat. Dandelion is also chock full of vitamins A and C, powerful antioxidants. Dandelion roots are thought to help detoxify the liver and have been used in different cultures to treat all sorts of problems including kidney disease, swelling, skin problems, heartburn, upset stomach, fever, boils, eye problems, diabetes, and diarrhea.

Dill, fennel, and anise all help with digestion by speeding up the digestive system and increasing the secretion of gastric acids, which are chemicals that break down food.

Eggs are an amazing source of choline, which is essential to brain functioning. They also contain lutein and zeaxanthin, antioxidants that researchers say are linked to healthy eyesight. On top of that, they have the most amazing amino acid profile to maximize protein, which is essential to growth and repair in the body. Eggs are great to use in conjunction with a cleanse as they are an efficiently digested protein source.

Greens (such as **kale, collards, spinach, and romaine**) can increase binding of bile acids, a process that makes it easier for the body to get rid of them, because of the phytonutrients found in them. Bile acids are made from cholesterol in the liver and can increase the risk of colorectal cancer. Binding of bile acids and increasing their elimination from the body is thought to be the way that dietary fiber lowers cholesterol.

Green tea is rich in antioxidants - even richer than white, black, and oolong teas even though they all come from the same plant. That's because green tea leaves are prepared differently; they aren't fermented before they're dried which keeps them rich in antioxidants called catechins. Catechins may trigger weight loss by stimulating the body to burn more calories and by decreasing body fat. Also, hot tea is sipped slowly, which reinforces mindful eating habits.

Green apples are rich in flavanols, especially cyanidin and epicatechin. They work with vitamin C to help eliminate free radicals and fight cancer. The fiber in apples helps to regulate blood sugar and the biting and chewing efforts decrease bacteria and increase salivary excretion to help fight cavities.

Lemon helps the liver detoxify. Lemon juice can also aid in digestion. Both the smell and flavor can increase saliva production - one study showed this can happen just by looking at lemons - which is essential to the digestion process. Lemon juice also directly affects the GI tract. Just 100 microliters of lemon juice (that's REALLY tiny) has been shown to be a very potent stimulant of pancreatic juices, also essential for proper digestion.

Lentils are a superhero legume because they are full of fiber, loaded with B vitamins, iron and zinc. They help to keep you feeling satisfied and (like all legumes) boost metabolism with lean protein. Best of all, they're super quick to cook up.

Milk thistle is a flowering herb that assists in liver cell regeneration. It works by increasing amounts of ribosomal RNA (genetic material) in the liver which increases protein synthesis to make liver cells. Because of this, milk thistle is often used to treat patients with liver disease.

Onion and garlic are both rich in sulfur containing compounds, which are involved in sulfation, the main route for toxins to be cleared from the body. Garlic and onions are both part of the *Allium* genus and can help protect us against certain cancers including stomach and colorectal cancer. In lab studies, the antioxidants (including allicin, allixin, allyl sulfides, quercetin, and a large group of organosulfur compounds) in garlic and onions have been shown to slow or stop the growth of tumors in prostate, bladder, colon, and stomach tissue.

Oregano is the most antioxidant-dense spice on the market. In fact, on a per-gram basis, it has four times more antioxidant activity than blueberries do. One of the antioxidants in oregano includes beta-caryophyllene, a substance that reduces inflammation.

Organic and pasture-raised chicken is a lean protein source grown without synthetic pesticides or fertilizers, antibiotics and hormones. Recent studies have concluded that the inclusion of organic and pasture-raised chicken can increase the omega-3 content of the triglycerides circulating around your blood, making it an anti-inflammatory agent. Chicken is a great source of B vitamins as well, aiding in a broad list of bodily functions including the production of serotonin, the “feel good” hormone and cell metabolism.

Salmon is a fatty fish, like mackerel and sardines, and is full of calcium, vitamin D and omega-3 fatty acids. It helps in weight loss and maintenance and is a great anti-inflammatory food, calming the skin and making it glow. Wild salmon is the best choice.

Vinegar has no calories, but it contains potassium, magnesium, calcium, pectin and acetic acid. It aids in digestion and improves the absorption and utilization of several essential nutrients.

Wheat grass purifies the liver. It's rich in choline, a mineral that has been shown to prevent fat buildup in the liver. Once choline enters the cells, it's converted into a different compound that can enhance the breakdown of fatty acids and formation of phospholipids, which ultimately helps transport fatty acids in the blood and remove fats from the liver. Wheatgrass juice is also filled with bioflavonoids like apigenin, quercetin and luteolin - they all act as antioxidants in the body - and indole compounds which play a role in cancer prevention (just like indole-3-carbinol in broccoli).

How to Cleanse

While you should aim to include these foods in your diet on a regular basis, some people will benefit from a four to seven day cleanse as a little kickstart. A cleanse full of these internal “scrubbing” agents, in the form of whole, real, unprocessed foods is a great way to start with a clean slate from which to rebuild your nutritional foundation. The side effects of eating these clean foods generally includes increased energy, diminished bloating and a few pounds of weight loss.

Keep in mind that cleanses -- even whole food cleanses -- are meant to be a short term bridge to jump start a healthful diet, and are not recommended for the long term. They typically do not meet all of the essential dietary requirements for health. Give a real food cleanse a try if healthful eating efforts have been derailed. They’ll put you back on your Nutritious Life track.

On the following page is a sample cleanse. Follow this plan for four to seven days.

Sample Cleanse

BREAKFAST

Scrambled eggs (1 whole omega-3-enriched egg plus 3 egg whites)*

1 teaspoon dried basil

1 cup green tea

1 cup water with 1 ounce lemon juice

SNACK

Sliced Granny Smith apple

1 teaspoon cinnamon

LUNCH

Spinach (cooked or raw); eat as much spinach as you'd like. And have fun dressing the spinach with flavored vinegars, such as fig, raspberry, or orange. Any type of vinegar will do.

4 ounces salmon or halibut (grilled, baked, or broiled) with 1 teaspoon dried spices, such as oregano

8 pecan halves

1 cup water with 1 ounce lemon juice

SNACK

Steamed artichoke or 1/2 cup artichoke hearts in water (Monterey Farms makes an easy eat-right-out-of-the-bag variety.)

1 cup green tea

DINNER

Large romaine lettuce salad with carrots, tomatoes, and red bell peppers; dress with 1 teaspoon extra virgin olive oil and lemon juice to taste

Steamed asparagus

4 ounces any lean protein (grilled, baked, or broiled) with spices such as 1 teaspoon oregano

1 cup water with 1 ounce lemon juice

1 cup blueberries