
Many people believe that detoxing can boost their energy and that superfoods will help in the fight against fatigue. But is there scientific evidence to back this up?

Detox doesn't boost energy

Detox diets are often touted as energy boosters, but there's no scientific evidence to support this claim. If you're eating well, there's no need to use these diets.

Detox supporters claim that our bodies are overloaded with "toxins" from pollution, smoking, food additives and so on. Detoxing is done through a range of methods, including massage, fasting followed by a strict diet of raw vegetables, fruit and fruit juices, and water; colonic irrigation, and supplements, usually taken over seven to 10 days. Supporters of detox claim this is a way to get rid of the toxins.

But there's no scientific evidence to show that our bodies need help to get rid of waste products – this is what our kidneys do – and there's no proof that detox diets work.

The British Dietetic Association has said that detox diets are "marketing myths rather than nutritional reality".

So what does work?

Some people say they feel more focused and energetic after a detox diet. But this could be because they believe they're doing something good for their bodies.

For the majority of people, a healthy, balanced diet based on starchy carbohydrates (wholegrain where possible), with lots of fruit and vegetables, plus some milk, dairy, meat or other source of lean sources of protein, is a better way to protect your health.

'Superfoods' are a myth

Newspapers, magazines and the internet are full of stories about miracle superfoods. Celery, broccoli, beetroot juice, jam, popcorn, cereals and even the great British cuppa, to name just a few, have all been hyped as superfoods in the past two years.

There is no official definition of a superfood. The EU has banned the use of the word on product packaging, unless the claim is backed up by convincing research.

These claims are almost always exaggerated. It's actually incredibly difficult to prove that one particular food is better for our health than all the others we eat. Studies on so-called superfoods tend not to do this.

So what does work?

When it comes to keeping healthy, it's important to eat a variety of foods, rather than concentrate on one food in the hope it will work miracles. Eat a balanced diet containing a range of foods to ensure you get the nutrients your body needs. Limit your intake of alcohol and high-fat, high-sugar and salty foods.

Read about the evidence and health claims behind 10 popular superfoods. This report also debunks the superfood myth.

Energy drinks have mixed benefits

Many people turn to energy drinks such as Red Bull and Lucozade Energy for a quick boost.

Energy booster myths and facts

Energy drinks are loaded with sugar and caffeine (sometimes more than twice the caffeine that's in a can of cola) so they'll certainly give you a temporary energy jolt. However, the boost is short-lived and may be accompanied by other problems.

The caffeine in energy drinks can make you feel irritable and restless. It can increase your blood pressure, while the sugar can contribute to weight gain, especially if you don't exercise regularly.

So what does work?

Plain water is a better choice than an energy drink. For a quick surge of energy, snack on fruit.

Vitamin supplements aren't as good as eating well

Think taking a multivitamin each day will make you feel less tired? Think again.

Most people don't need to take vitamin supplements, because they can get all the nutrients that they need from a healthy, balanced diet. Popping pills doesn't offer you the same benefits as eating well.

The Department of Health recommends certain supplements for some groups of people. Read more about who needs to take a vitamin supplement.

As a general rule, it's better to get your vitamins from food rather than tablets.

Evidence suggests that fruit and vegetables are good for us, not just because of the individual vitamins and minerals they contain, but because of their combination of different nutrients and fibre. Increasing the amount of fruit and veg you eat will benefit your health more than taking supplements will.

So what does work?

Forget the multivitamin packs. Eat a healthy balanced diet instead. That will give you all the energy you need, as well as being good for your overall health.