

A NOTE ON NUTRITION

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Q&As

Dear Ms Tasneem Hasin,

'Detox' is a term thrown around a lot. And detox drinks supposedly have numerous health benefits. Although it may seem silly, but what exactly is 'detox'? And can you please explain how a drink can detoxify the body?

—Tarana

Detoxification, in simple terms, is the cleansing of blood, done by removing impurities from the liver, where toxins are processed for excretion. Detox drinks are handy for flushing these toxins out of the body.

Detox diets are generally short-term dietary interventions, which are commonly recommended because of potential exposure to toxic chemicals like pollutants, synthetic chemicals, heavy metals, and other harmful compounds.

The body reacts in a certain way when it can no longer cope with the rising toxin levels in the blood. Symptoms may include — unexplained fatigue, sluggish elimination, irritated skin, allergies, low-grade infection, puffy eyes or bags under the eyes, bloating, menstrual problems, and mental confusion.

Detox drink could be of various types —

Simple fruit and vegetable detox

Smoothie cleanse

Juice cleanse

Sugar detox

Hypoallergenic detox involves cleansing and protection of the liver by taking herbs and vitamin C, which helps the body produce glutathione, a compound that drives away toxins. Breathing deeply is also important as it allows oxygen to circulate more completely through your system.

Dear Tasneem,
This is a problem that I have developed only recently — I am having difficulty digesting milk and dairy products. Could it be that I have become lactose intolerant?

—Farooq

Lactose intolerance is the inability to break down a specific type of natural sugar called lactose, which is commonly found in dairy products, such as milk and yoghurt.

A person becomes lactose intolerant when his/her small intestine stops making enough of the enzyme lactase, that digests and breaks down lactose. If a person shows any of the following symptoms within 30-120 minutes after consuming a

dairy product, it is possible that s/he is lactose intolerant.

Symptoms may range from mild to severe, and include bloating, cramps, diarrhoea, increasing levels of gas in the stomach leading to pain, and, or, nausea. However, true lactose intolerance is rarely diagnosed by medical testing, and people frequently mistake their gastrointestinal problems as a sign of intolerance to lactose.

The best way to treat lactose intolerance is by means of dietary changes; supplements of lactase enzyme, correction of underlying conditions in the small intestine, and, possibly, by adaptation to increasing amounts of milk is also recommended.

Ideally the practice is to introduce small amounts (half cup) of cold milk



initially, and then to increase at weekly intervals.

Dear Ms Tasneem Hasin

I am a lactating mother; about 12 kg overweight. Should I go for a weight reducing diet?

—Fatima

The female body, while lactating, is able to partly compensate for the extra demand on nutrients by using them more efficiently and there is usually an increase in appetite. Hunger pangs are often the body's way of getting the extra nutrients.

There are some nutrients like iodine, vitamin B12, iron, and calcium which the baby needs; a reduced amount may have an adverse effect on the growth of the baby.

It is recommended that mothers should wait until baby is at least two-month-old before starting a weight reduction diet. Breastfeeding beyond the sixth month itself increases maternal weight loss. It is strongly advised to avoid quick-fix

solutions in all forms.

Liquid diets, low-carb diets, fad diets, weight loss medication, etc., are not recommended while breastfeeding. Nutritionists suggest to decrease the calories gradually as a sudden drop in calories can reduce milk supply for the baby.

My family has a long history of diabetes. Are there any dietary solutions that may reduce the risk of becoming diabetic?

—Shakeb

While one cannot change the genetic makeup, avoiding food high in refined carbs and sugar that result in the increase of blood sugar and insulin levels, reduces the chances of becoming diabetic. High fibre and complex carbs too are highly beneficial in reducing the risks.

Performing physical activity on a regular basis can increase insulin secretion and sensitivity, which may help prevent the progression from prediabetes to diabetes.

Drinking water, which is the best detox, instead of other beverages, may help control blood sugar and insulin levels.

Carrying excess weight, particularly in the abdominal area, increases the likelihood of developing diabetes.

If one can minimise the carb intake, blood sugar levels will not rise very much after eating. Avoiding large portions can help reduce insulin and blood sugar levels. Eating too much food at one time has been shown to cause higher blood sugar and insulin levels in people at risk of diabetes.

Interestingly, consuming food high in vitamin D, or taking supplements can help optimise vitamin D blood levels, which in turn reduces risks of diabetes. Processed foods increase the risk of diabetes by 30 percent. Minimising processed food and focusing on whole foods with protective effects on health may help decrease the risk of diabetes. Coffee and tea have antioxidants known as polyphenols that may help protect against diabetes.

Photo: Collected

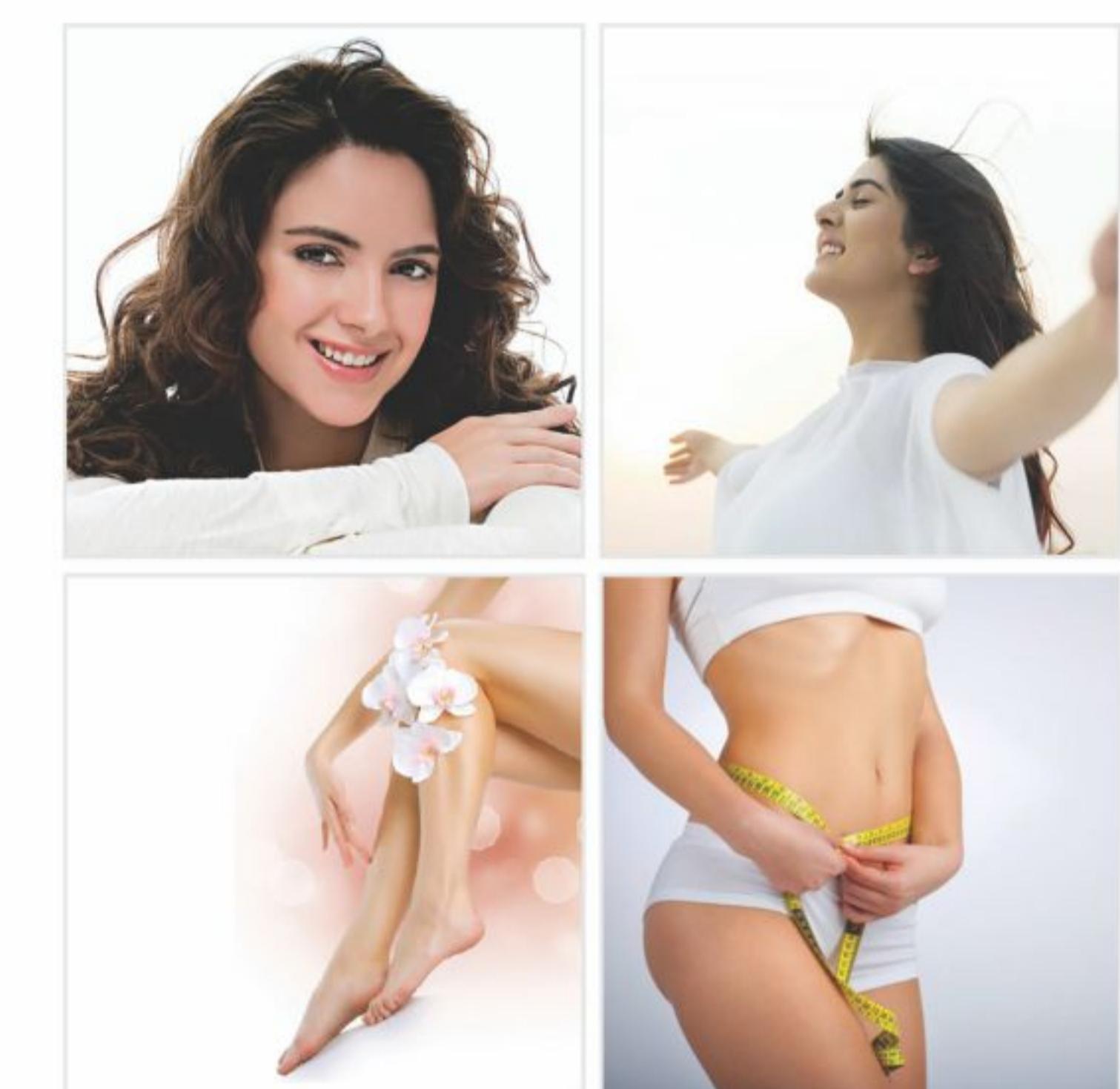
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