

Q. Is juicing a good way to eat more fruits and vegetables?

A. You may have thought about juicing to add more fruits and vegetables to your diet.

Here's how it works:

1. You put some fruits and vegetables into a high-powered juicing machine.
2. It removes the fiber and pulp.
3. Out comes a nutrient-rich juice.

If you're not getting enough fruits and vegetables, juicing is a great first step to improve your diet. Stripping out the pulp and fiber makes them easy to gulp down, which might sound better than eating broccoli. But the process isn't perfect.

It can get expensive. And it may not be as healthy as simply eating an apple or leafy-green salad.

Some potential problems with juicing include:

High blood sugar

Foods with a lot of fiber and pulp help control blood sugar levels. Juicing can cause a spike in blood sugar. This can increase:

- Hunger
- Irritability
- Fatigue, and
- Risk for diabetes

A recent study found that juicing on a regular basis, compared to eating fruits and vegetables, increased the risk for diabetes.¹

Tummy troubles

Let's say you set up your juicer and feed it a cucumber, an apple, two celery stalks, two carrots, and three beets.



Your juice will have about 40 grams of dietary sugar. That's almost the same amount as a 12-ounce soda!

But this dietary sugar, called *sorbitol*, isn't easily digested. Gulp down the drink, and what follows is a bout of gas, bloating, and discomfort. That's a lot less likely to happen if you eat fruits and vegetables instead of juicing.

Harmful bacteria

Toss your favorite mix of fruits and veggies into a juicer. That might sound fast and easy. But there's a critical step you need to complete before that. Wash the fruits and vegetables.

A recent study checked freshly squeezed juice for bacteria.² It found unhealthy levels in 43 percent of the samples. If you don't thoroughly wash your fruits and vegetables, your juice could be contaminated.

Freshly-squeezed juice can also develop harmful bacteria in a short amount of time, according to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

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If this happens, vomiting, diarrhea, fever, headache, and other symptoms of food poisoning may occur.

Weight gain

Most people who juice do it as a way to lose weight. And if you follow a low-calorie diet and only drink juice from fruits and vegetables, you will lose weight at first.

However, this approach to dieting often backfires. Research shows that it's common for people who lose weight rapidly to gain all the weight back.³ The better approach to weight loss is a balanced diet and regular exercise.

Eat the whole thing

Juicing fruits and vegetables may seem like an easy way to improve your diet and lose weight. It's certainly a better option than burgers, fries, and sugary drinks. But eating whole fruits and vegetables is better for you.

Aim to eat 2 to 3 cups of vegetables per day, and 1½ to 2 cups of fruit per day. If that's hard for you to do, get the extra servings you need from juice.

References

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