

UP-CLOSE LOOK: THE RAW FOODS DIET

Lee Cotton gives refrigerators make overs for a living. The pilates instructor and nutrition planner cleans out clients' pantries, creating a healthier diet. The Hippocrates Health Institute West Palm Beach educator gives us a closer look at a diet option for the new year.

Defining the Raw Foods Diet

A raw foods diet is similar to a vegan diet, focusing on plant-based food and limiting animal products. It differs from a vegan diet because food is uncooked, never heated to a temperature above 120 degrees. Cooking food destroys enzymes that can fight off illnesses and diseases like cancer and heart disease, Cotton says.



Reaping the Benefits

Switching to a plant-based diet helps reduce inflammation caused by preservatives and excess sodium.

While reducing inflammation, a plant-based diet also helps to keep the body's pH balanced. "[When] increasing alkalinity in the body, it's very difficult to create diseases in the body," Cotton explains. "Cancer can't really survive in an oxygenated environment."

Tools of the Trade

A raw foods diet calls for several essential tools. A dehydrator will warm food without destroying important enzymes, Cotton says. She also recommends a vitamin blender, a spiralizer to make noodles out of vegetables, a mandoline to slice and cut vegetables [you can use them to make things like vegetable chips], a food processor to make things like hummus and pesto, and a nut milk bag to make your own milk out of any nut or seed.

Protein Power

A lot of great protein sources aren't meats, Cotton says, including many vegetables. Nuts, seeds and legumes are good sources of protein, and kale has more iron than steak. Quinoa is also very high in protein.

Going All the Way

Most people on raw foods diets consume about 50 to 70 percent raw food and eat cooked food for the rest of their diet. *[Cotton herself says she is on a 70 percent raw, 30 percent cooked diet].* Even switching to a partial raw foods diet can be beneficial to the body.

For more tips from Lee Cotton, please visit www.pilatesandyourpalate.com.

HOW TO: GET A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP

Cleveland Clinic Sleep Disorders Center's Dr. Jose Ramirez gives us a guide to sleeping better in the new year.



Photo by Alan Cleaver

TEMPERATURE

- A high body temperature may lead to restlessness. Don't workout right before going to bed – it will increase your body temperature. Make sure there are at least three to four hours in between the end of your workout and when you plan to go to sleep.
- Don't take a warm shower or bath right before bed. While the warm water can be relaxing, it will increase your body temperature. Leave at least one to two hours between when you bathe and when you plan to go to sleep.
- While 74 to 75 degrees is often seen as the ideal temperature to keep your room during the night, Ramirez says it varies by person and that couples sharing a bedroom must compromise so they can both be comfortable.

NAPPING

- Napping in general is a very poor sleep habit and the compulsion to do it could be a sign of a sleep disorder, he says. Napping during the day can lead to trouble sleeping at night, and because the body's rhythms are so highly programmable, napping can create a cycle that makes it almost impossible to sleep at night.
- However, if you have an event that causes sleep deprivation one night, Ramirez says you should definitely take a two- to three-hour nap the next day because almost nobody can function on a night of a couple hours of sleep.

ENVIRONMENT

- Avoid falling asleep on the couch watching TV Ramirez says. If you fall asleep there, you're likely to be napping for a short time instead of getting a full night's uninterrupted sleep. Bright lights from TVs, computers and even phone screens should be avoided for at least an hour before bed because they stimulate and wake up the brain.
- Ramirez advises against sharing your bed with pets because they bark, move around and can irritate allergies.
- Keep your clock out of view because looking at the clock can create anxiety and trigger insomnia.

DIET

- Don't drink coffee, tea or caffeinated beverages after 3 p.m.
- Avoid heavy meats before bed or anything that might irritate your stomach.
- Avoid alcohol, especially if you have a sleep disorder like sleep apnea. While a drink or two before bed might relax you and help you fall asleep, when it wears off your body becomes much more alert, he says.
- Foods with tryptophan can help you fall asleep like milk, bananas and some pastas.