

# Why Juicing May Be the Newest Eating Disorder

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People are getting addicted to cleanses for emotional reasons

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Boost your energy, recharge your batteries, rev up your metabolism, rejuvenate your spirit, silence unhealthy cravings—nutritional cleanses supposedly do it all. Celebrities such as **Salma Hayek** and **Anne Hathaway** attribute their lustrous glow to regular cleanses, and the juice



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business is now a multi-billion-dollar industry. So they must be good for us, right? Not necessarily.

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Although they're meant to serve as an antidote to the excesses of modern life, cleanses can sometimes end up becoming an addiction themselves.

Approached responsibly, cleanses can give the body a break, allowing it to eliminate toxins that have accumulated from eating and drinking the wrong things. According to Frank Lipman, MD, who works with stars like **Gwyneth Paltrow** and **Kyra Sedgwick** at his Eleven Eleven Wellness Center in New York City, "A good cleanse resets your body, giving it a fresh start. Your digestive organs will get a vacation from the bad stuff, allowing your body's natural detoxification systems to reboot and return to peak performance. Whenever you feel sluggish, fatigued, or in need of greater energy or clearer skin, a detox is a good next step."

But cleansing is not a lifestyle. By definition, it's meant to be temporary. Mary Anne Cohen, author of *Lasagna for Lunch: Declaring Peace with Emotional Eating*, has treated many young women addicted to juicing in her role as Director of The New York Center for Eating Disorders. She points out, "Some people turn to juicing as a way of life, as a way of cleansing out their system, and getting some quick weight loss. They can become addicted to juicing because of the many initial positive benefits: you lose weight, you have the illusion of being in control of your eating, and the juicing makes you feel cleaned out. Just like a runner's high or the anorexic's high of starvation, juicing and cleansing make your endorphins kick in."

Cohen says that in her experience as an eating disorders therapist, she's noticed that people turn to juicing or cleansing at times of transition, anxiety, or upheaval in their lives. She explains, "The most glaring drawback to cleansing through juice fasts is that they don't help you examine the problems or situations that gave rise to your relying on juice cleansing. Juice cleanses may help you temporarily feel better, but they don't teach you how to deal with emotional stress or food cravings."

One of Cohen's patients illustrates this point: "My patient Ava discovered juice cleansing at a critical time in her life. After going through a difficult divorce, Ava decided to turn over a new leaf by adhering to a strict cleansing regime. It became like a new religion to her— she felt lighter, clearer, and the lurking depression she had been feeling seemed to lift. Then the rigidity of the juice cleanse and the lack of satisfaction from eating kicked in, and Ava began cheating on the

cleanse. She realized that she needed to stop. She told me, ‘I didn't like coming down to earth with eating regular meals like a normal person, but I couldn't cleanse forever. Juicing was great for a while, but the truth is I became addicted to the whole ritual that went into the juice cleanse, and I think it helped me run away from my problems.’”

Is there a balance between cleansing safely now and then and becoming addicted to it? Cohen concludes, “In truth, your body knows how to cleanse itself naturally without any extra help from you. If you find yourself cleansing too often or for too long, it’s not a sign you need to detox, it’s a sign you need to work on separating your emotional stress from your eating.”

Sources:

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