

Words on Wellness

Your extension connection to nutrition and fitness

The Diet That Is All Fluff

Many crazy diets appear in the headlines. Some recent offerings include the feeding tube diet and the tapeworm diet. The latest diet to make headlines is the cotton ball diet, and the science behind it resembles the structure of cotton—unsupportive fluff.

The diet involves consuming five cotton balls dipped in orange juice, lemonade, or a smoothie. The claim is that you will feel full without gaining weight. Some dieters consume these before their meal to limit calorie intake, while others rely exclusively on the cotton balls as their “food” intake.

Medical experts agree that nothing good can come of this diet, and in fact it is very dangerous for the following reasons:

- Cotton balls may not be cotton—most are bleached polyester fibers that contain lots of chemicals
- Eating synthetic cotton balls is similar to eating cloth, or even buttons or coins
- Risks include choking, malnutrition, or even worse, a blockage in the intestinal tract, which can be life-threatening

A healthier and safer approach to feel full is to make sure you get plenty of fiber in your diet. Follow these tips to get the recommended 25 to 38 grams of fiber each day:

- Eat fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and legumes (beans and peas), which are all good sources of fiber
- Look at the Nutrition Facts Panel for a product’s fiber content—20 percent or more is considered high
- Include fiber-rich foods with meals and snacks

The adjacent smoothie recipe is a good source of fiber and includes 5 grams per serving!

For more information on how to safely achieve and maintain a healthy weight, visit <http://myplate.gov/weight-management-calories/weight-management.html>

Want to know more about choosing high fiber foods? The *Whole Grains* publication, <https://store.extension.iastate.edu/ItemDetail.aspx?ProductID=13930> provides information on how to choose whole grain foods. The *Dried Beans, Peas, and Lentils* publication, <https://store.extension.iastate.edu/ItemDetail.aspx?ProductID=14036>, tells how to use dried beans.



Raspberry Mango Spinach Smoothie

Serves: 2
(Serving size: 1½ cups each)

Ingredients

2/3 cup frozen raspberries
1 cup frozen mango
1/2 cup frozen chopped spinach
6 ounces vanilla yogurt
1 cup milk

Directions

1. In a blender combine all ingredients and mix until smooth.
2. Serve immediately and enjoy.

Optional

Add 2 tablespoons ground flax or chia seeds for about 3 to 5 grams of added fiber.

Nutrient information per serving

190 calories, 0 g fat, 0 mg cholesterol, 80 mg sodium, 37 g carbohydrates, 5 g fiber, 30 g sugar, 14 g protein



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Dating 101

Americans throw out billions of pounds of food every year due to confusion about food expiration date labeling practices, according to a recent report released by Harvard Law School's Food Law and Policy Clinic and the Natural Resources Defense Council. This study found that over 90 percent of Americans prematurely toss food because they misinterpret dates on food labels as indicators of food safety.



For most products, date shelf life is determined by the manufacturer and is based on food quality, not food safety. The lead author of the study concluded that a standardized date labeling system providing useful information to consumers is needed. Until a new system is in place, use the guide below to help decipher codes on your next grocery store trip:

- A "Sell-by" date tells the store how long to display the product for sale. You should buy the product before the date expires.
- A "Best If Used By (or Before)" date is recommended for best flavor or quality. It is not a purchase or safety date.
- A "Use-By" date is the last date recommended for the use of the product while at peak quality. The date has been determined by the manufacturer of the product.
- "Closed or coded dates" are packing numbers for use by the manufacturer.

It is also important that you keep track of your food inventory at home. The acronym FIFO (first in, first out) can help you remember oldest food should be stored in front and used first, while newer items should be placed in the back of your fridge or cabinets.

A helpful resource is www.stilltasty.com. Here you can type in a food item and determine how long it will stay safe and tasty. The website provides storage recommendations for the fridge and freezer. An app for the iPhone is available as well, and even alerts you when food should be tossed! A good rule of thumb is "4 day throw away"; after four days leftovers should be eaten, thrown out, or frozen.

<http://www.4daythrowaway.org/>

HIIT Is a HIT!

The American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) has listed High-Intensity Interval Training (HIIT) as its top fitness trend for 2014. HIIT involves short bursts of activity followed by a short period of rest or recovery. These exercise programs are usually performed in less than 30 minutes. Research suggests HIIT can boost metabolism and accelerate weight loss.



Although many people can safely participate in HIIT, it is not for everyone. This type of training does come with increased risk of injury and may not be safe for some. Michael Bracko, Fellow of the ACSM, recommends always warming up for five to ten minutes before starting intervals. If an individual has an injury or has not been cleared for exercise, he advises that those issues be resolved before beginning HIIT.

Once you have consulted with a physician and been given the green light to try HIIT, you might want to try it at home. Bracko does sprint intervals with his dog. "I throw a stuffed duck, she chases it, and I chase her. It's a blast!"

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