

Quick tips on juicing fruit and vegetables, and making smoothies

The benefits

Juices are full of enzymes and nutrients that can help fight disease and bolster your immune system. They help speed the metabolism and provide necessary enzymes that are lacking in cooked foods. These enzymes help digest the foods we eat but are destroyed by heat during cooking. Juices are rapidly absorbed and start to work immediately as they are easy to digest, especially useful for the elderly and children.

What do they do?

Juices and smoothies provide an instant lift followed by a sustained energy release. This is far more beneficial to the body than the shock of a sugar-rush from chocolate or a caffeine-hit from coffee. These actually deplete your energy levels rapidly after the initial high.

What is in them?

Juices contain high levels of potassium, a mineral required for the cells in our bodies to work efficiently. Dietary potassium helps maintain the acid-balance in our bodies by counteracting the effects of a diet high in acids such as salt. This balance is vital to the regulation of blood pressure. Another important mineral found in high levels in juices, is magnesium. This is required by the heart and muscles in order to avoid muscle weakness and cramps (in addition to insomnia), thus magnesium is important in helping to prevent heart attacks.

What's the best one to start with first?

If you start with a base of carrot or apple you can add virtually any vegetable, even brussel sprouts, and they taste good! This is a brilliant way to add more green vegetables to your diet, however juices are best consumed within 10 minutes of preparation as the enzymes are lost if the juices are stored for longer. There are many websites on juicing that can give you a wide range of recipes and most juicers now come with a book of recipes (such as the one by Jason Vale).

Smoothie making or health shakes

Health shakes are the ultimate fast food as they can be made to order in a matter of minutes. All you need is a strong blender and a base of yoghurt or rice milk to which you add frozen or fresh fruits, and blend. You can include a handful of washed spinach leaves for added vitality and you will not even realise it is there!

A handful of muesli or some nuts can be added and blended to make it more of a fast meal/breakfast. You can make your own blends to suit your own tastes e.g. the use of colourful berries can be helpful in an anti-ageing regime (blueberries are particularly good for the eyes and have been shown to reduce eyestrain).

Blueberries, citrus, red / black grapes, kiwi and spinach are examples of foods high in antioxidants and phytochemicals which are extremely beneficial to health.

There are many websites on smoothies but try to incorporate recipes from the more adventurous ones that use vegetables as well as fruits in their shakes.