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Reasons to go Raw

Research has shown that the SAD (Standard American Diet) has been linked to disease, low energy, obesity, food addictions, food allergies, and high blood pressure. Yet a lot of people still aren't really clear on all the many benefits of being on a raw diet.

First, let's define what being raw really means. The basic principle of eating raw is to consume a diet of primarily uncooked, whole plant food. 75%-100% of the diet is centered on:

Fruit

Oh, how I love fresh, ripe, juicy fruit! As you might already know, fruits are very good for elimination, and they're alkalizing as well. Eating fruit promotes steady blood sugar levels and reduces cravings for sweets after meals. I love to wrap a banana in a leaf of romaine lettuce. It's so good and so simple. You have a Raw wrap sandwich right there and it takes less than sixty seconds to make. Before going Raw, I never would have imagined eating my banana wrapped in a piece of lettuce, but *holy cow*, it's *great!* You can also add fresh greens to your fruit smoothies (such as Romaine lettuce, spinach, celery, kale, or parsley) for a healthy, blood sugar-balancing smoothie. On a High Raw diet, you'll notice that you don't drink as much water as you used to. That's because you're getting so much water in the produce you're eating. Fruit consists mostly of water, just like the human body. Fruit is also very satiating because it raises blood sugar and reduces appetite – not to mention they're excellent for overall health because of their high vitamin content. You're going to find yourself craving fruit, so be prepared. I always have a few bowls of fruit on my countertop. I keep a steady supply of fresh, organic bananas, apples, grapefruits, oranges, kiwi, or mangos – whatever is in season.

Greens

I heard somewhere that if you put a bunch of nutritionists in a room, the topic of discussion invariably ends up about the power of Greens. That's because they are extremely important for health. Green, leafy vegetables are powerful and have the highest percentage of minerals per calorie of any class of foods. When you're beginning to transition to a High Raw diet, you might want to emphasize the "easy-to-digest" greens and vegetables, such as lettuce, celery, green leafy sprouts, and non-sweet fruits like cucumbers, tomatoes, summer squash, zucchini, and red bell peppers (anything with a seed inside is considered a fruit). Dark greens and cruciferous vegetables such as kale, collards, cabbage, and broccoli are very nutritious (rich in protein and minerals), but can be harder to digest for some people, especially if you start eating a lot of them all at once. One thing you can do is to try shredding them finely and massaging them with a little sea salt, olive oil and lemon juice to soften them. This will not only help in digestion, but it's also a great way to get a "cooked-feeling" meal because of the softness the kale or cabbage takes on after doing that.

Another thing you can do to ease digestion when eating dark, leafy greens is to drink the greens as juice or a blended soup. You can also add your greens to blended fruit smoothies (use 60% fruit, 40% greens, and water to thin). It's so delicious and filling, and you'll feel the benefits immediately. Dehydrated, green, super food powders are convenient supplements for many on-the-go people, especially while traveling. This will ensure that you're always getting your greens.

RAW Nuts and Seeds

Raw nuts and seeds are an excellent food. Nutritionally, they are packed with goodness. They are rich in protein, high in heart-friendly fats, low in saturated fat, and a good source of dietary fiber. They also have a wide range of other essential nutrients, including B group vitamins, vitamin E, iron, zinc, potassium, and magnesium, not to mention plant sterols and antioxidants. Because nuts and seeds come from a variety of species, each nut or seed has its own nutritional advantage. Brazil nuts provide large quantities of selenium – in fact, just one Brazil nut can provide you with all the selenium you need in a day, while almonds are a valuable source of calcium. Pistachios provide plant sterols (that help prevent cholesterol absorption), while walnuts are a rich source of omega-3 fatty acids. As with food in general, the advice is to eat a variety of nuts and seeds; this way you will obtain the wide range of nutrients they all contain.

Why are nuts and seeds so good for us? Firstly, they are excellent for heart health. Studies show that consumption of about 25–50 grams of nuts a day (a small handful) provides a similar level of protection against heart disease as that provided by cholesterol-lowering drugs. It also appears that nuts are protective against diabetes, as the high levels of unsaturated fats seem to help insulin sensitivity.

As nuts are a concentrated source of protein, fats, and fiber, they are slow to digest and very filling. For this reason, they help people maintain a healthy weight rather than contributing to weight gain. The important thing, however, is to watch quantity; stick to the recommended 25-50 gram portion size per day (you can eat more if you are underweight or not gaining weight).

Besides being cost-effective, simple to prepare, and easy to digest, eating raw food versus cooked food has many other amazing benefits.

Top Ten Reasons to Go RAW

1. Heal Your Body

The body is amazing in its healing power, but without the proper nutrition, it cannot function in the way it was made to do. To make the body a dumping ground for dead, cooked, and processed foods is ignoring the laws of nature where the body is concerned. Raw foods help the body do its work and provide healing power to any diseased parts it may have. Raw foods are not necessarily miracle foods that heal you...they are just the ultimate in nutrition for your body.

Raw foods heal because the more you consume raw and unprocessed foods, the less you are eating the processed foods that can and do harm you.

When food is cooked beyond a specific temperature, the necessary nutrients are then depleted and the body's immune system weakens at an alarming rate. At this point, it causes colds, flu, diabetes, heart disease, allergies, and other illnesses and conditions to enter your body. Raw foods build the immune system to the optimum defense level, giving it the fighting power it needs to keep disease where it belongs – outside of your body.

2. Look and Feel Younger

Life, weather, stress, unbalanced emotions, and toxicities found in cooked foods all add to a worn and aged appearance. Consuming raw foods counterbalances these adverse effects and allows the body to release its natural glow. Why spend thousands of dollars a year on lotions and potions that promise to keep you beautiful when you can nourish your beauty from the inside out with a raw diet?

3. Get the Most Out of Your Food

Modern food processing methods provide us with a vast array of convenience foods – but most of it is stripped of real nutritional value. The most valuable nutritional components of food are also the most unstable. Manufacturers prefer to make food from ingredients that are already stripped of nutrients, like sugar, white flour, cornstarch, and hydrogenated vegetable oils.

Fruits and vegetables are the most nutrient-dense foods on the planet.

Example: 500 calories of apples contain much more vitamins and minerals than 500 calories of potatoes.

You could argue by saying, "That's all very well, but it would take me forever to chew 500 grams of raw spinach, while it is easy to eat the same amount when it's nice and tender after being cooked. Therefore, cooked spinach is in fact more nutrient-dense than raw spinach, just simply because I can eat large amounts of it!"

Rawfoodists get around this by blending or juicing greens. We can make a smoothie that will contain a good load of greens and drink it in minutes.

By eating a diet composed mainly of fruits and vegetables, we automatically take in more than enough vitamins, minerals, and other essential and preventative nutrients than if we were to eat mostly cooked foods.

4. Lose Weight or Keep Your Perfect Weight

I defy you to gain, or even maintain, weight on a raw food diet. Really, give it a try. You can't do it. When you cook food, you destroy vitamins and let minerals seep out into the cooking water. Your body needs those vitamins and minerals, so it asks you to eat more by telling your brain you're hungry. That's why you eat more.

The way to reverse this is to eat food raw. You'll be getting a lot more nutrients, eating fewer calories, and you'll never be hungry.

5. Eat Whatever You Want, Whenever You Want!

This isn't really a health benefit, but it is pretty awesome. I never get that uncomfortable full feeling eating raw – you know, where you have to unbutton the top button on your pants and take a nap? I don't get that. I can eat as much as I want, and while I will feel full, I don't feel weighed down or tired.

6. Find Serenity

I believe that part of the raw food lifestyle is an expanded spiritual awareness. Often, as we begin to clean up our diets, we also begin to set our spirits free. We become so much more aware of the life force inside us and inside of every living creature. We become so much more grateful and in tune with who we really are and this wondrous life that we are living.

Spiritual enlightenment and awakening is definitely an aspect of the raw food lifestyle, and many people report that beginning the raw journey is also the beginning of an ongoing spiritual awakening.

7. Feel Lighter, Be More Regular, and Have INSANE Energy

You won't know this unless you try it for yourself, but eating raw gives you an amazing boost in energy. I used to get tired around two or three o'clock in the afternoon. Now, I simply don't have that problem. When I do get tired, it doesn't last nearly as long, and an orange or apple will recharge me within a few minutes.

You should naturally have around two to three bowel movements a day. If you're having less than that, it probably means your intestines are unhealthily clogged. A raw diet gives you more than enough fiber to keep you regular.

8. Sleep Like a Baby

It is a known fact that green smoothies and Raw Foods can help with anxiety and depression, which have been commonly associated with insomnia and restlessness. With all of the health benefits that living this way has to offer, why wait another minute? Try this for yourself and sleep like a baby!

9. Have Great Skin

The benefits of Raw Food on skin are possibly partly through the fact that it has less toxic and harmful substances than cooked food, and partly because it is a lot more abundant in life-giving and health-promoting nutrients such as vitamins, minerals, enzymes, and phytochemicals. The health of our skin is very much dependent on the health of our internal environment and

organs. When the body is unhealthy and toxic, these conditions manifest themselves externally. These could include dry skin, chaffed skin, dark eye rings, poor complexion, and body odor, to name just a few. There is a reason why certain traditional healing modalities are able to have a rough gauge of a person's state of health just by looking at external physical conditions, including skin health. Consumption of raw food and skin health is connected because raw foods translate to better health, which then improves the condition of one's skin. Further, raw foods also contain large amounts of antioxidants, which protect the skin against free radical damage. These antioxidants also offer great protection against sunburn. Again, the result is better skin health. Many who have transited towards more raw foods have experienced a markedly improved complexion. Others even comment that their skin looks radiant. When I was on a fully raw diet, people said that my complexion had improved and that my skin was "glowing."

Not intending or unable to go fully raw? It's fine – just increase the proportion of raw foods and fresh juices in your diet, and you *will* see the difference. Eat more raw foods, and your skin health will get better, too!

10. Feel Great

The best reason to eat a raw food diet is because it makes you feel great. Many people report a feeling of increased vitality and energy that they only experience eating this way.

If the raw food diet makes you feel great, you don't necessarily need proof to keep doing it! We may never be able to prove certain things, like what humans ate exactly 100,000 years ago or the "life force" factor in food, but what ultimately matters are the results.

I always tell people to compare themselves to themselves, not other people. You can compare how you feel from one period of your life — eating a certain diet — to another with different lifestyle choices, and come to your own conclusions.