

# Detox diets do work, retort manufacturers

Two American experts have slated detox diets this month stating that they do no more to expel toxins from the body than normal bodily functions. However two key detox manufacturers have fought back.

Both were recently mentioned in *The Guardian* as being "the best detox aids on the market".

More seriously, the "experts" say, detox diets can in fact amount to "protracted starvation" and prove a serious health hazard to some dieters.

The majority of detox diets are based on fruit, vegetables and water, while cutting out meat, alcohol, caffeine and processed foods.

However, Professor Roger Clemens, an expert in toxicology at the University of California, and Dr Peter Pressman, an endocrinologist at a private medical firm in Beverly Hills, have said that there is no evidence to support the belief that such regimes help to remove potentially damaging toxins from the body.

The lungs, kidneys, liver, gastrointestinal tract and immune system already remove or neutralise toxic substances within hours of consumption, they say.

In addition, they state that detox diets' claims of revitalising skin, colon decontamination and purging of the liver are simply "empty promises".

The widely reported benefit of feeling less bloated on a detox diet was simply due to the fact that less food was eaten, they say.

In the American magazine *Food Technology*: "The suggestion that elimination of noxious agents is enhanced because of this regimen is categorically unsubstantiated and runs counter to our understanding about human physiology and biochemistry."

They say the improvements detoxers see are instead due to changing from what is likely to have been a "poor" diet, adding: "What amounts to protracted starvation and nutrient insufficiency may ironically slow metabolic rates and breakdown of fat stores.

"While an antioxidant rich diet is probably a desirable goal, the negative impact of protein and calorie depriva-

tion likely far outweigh whatever beneficial effects may accrue."

A detox regime could also mask certain health problems or lead to delayed diagnosis of an illness. There "may be significant health risks associated with these kinds of regimens," the US experts warn.

They say children, teenagers, pregnant or breastfeeding women, older adults and those with heart disease, diabetes or irritable bowel disorders should avoid detox regimes.

Ursula Arens, a registered dietician and spokeswoman for the British Dietetic Association, said: "Detox is a meaningless term that is used all the time. The body is set up to deal with the chemicals it doesn't want and excrete them."

However, Simon Ranger, managing director of Seagreens, disagrees, stating: "The recent warnings and statements of California specialists address only part of the picture. Rules usually have exceptions and what is biologically true for people with sensible diets and good health no longer holds in cases of imbalanced diet, malfunctioning digestive and immune system, and for whatever other reasons, impaired metabolism.

"To say that 'the body is designed to detox itself and that 'the body is set up to deal with chemicals it doesn't want' is patently true but in reality the design is often abused — wittingly or through ignorance — or is just plain faulty. Either way we recommend that Seagreens Food Capsules — voted by *Proof* magazine as one of the two best detoxification products on the high street (*The Guardian*, May 7), should be used as the foundation for the daily diet and not as a rapid or temporary therapy, according to research." (Seagreens, data on file)

According to Seagreens, the mixture of wild Arctic Wrack seaweed varieties contained in the Food Capsules is said to be a complete food which naturally regulates metabolism and weight, makes energy more consistently available and cleanses the body of toxins and pollutants such as lead and mercury proven through scientific research.

"We focus on four principal modes of action which combine to help the body rid itself of sometimes excessive environmental toxins, and set in balance and regulate critical internal systems which determine digestion, metabolism and the circulation of nutrients. This the seaweed achieves by promoting a healthier gut flora and lining, by ensuring the daily presence of micronutrients so that poorly digested foods should not become toxic and by supporting the balance and circulation of arterial and cellular plasma. It is highly alkalizing."

Proof's other "best detox product" was Biofirm from Danish company New Nordic.

UK country manager Ben Butler told *HM*: "At New Nordic we strive to develop innovative food supplements, which will inspire people to live a healthier life."

Butler affirms that Biofirm is a "natural way of cleansing the body and a great way to kick start a diet". He said that the product combines traditionally used herbs with the latest scientific achievements in support of the body's own natural internal processes of elimination and detoxification, including flavonoids, prebiotics and patented bioactive glycoproteins from fruits. The product has been used in Scandinavia for more than 10 years and requires no fasting.

Ciaran Arstall, managing director of Bioconcepts, which manufactures Bio-Light, claimed to be the UK's No.1 best selling detox product says: "It may well be that in the USA most detox diets are based on fruit, vegetables and water, while cutting out meat, alcohol, caffeine and processed foods. This is not generally the case in the UK and most certainly not so far as Bioconcepts is concerned.

"We do not advocate cutting out meat, a major source of protein, but we do encourage the consumption also of fruit, vegetables, salads and, of course, water and we do recommend cutting



out alcohol, caffeine and processed foods for our short three day programme.

"This coincidentally is completely in line with our own Government's 'five portions a day' policy. Our goal is to promote a healthy change of lifestyle and to prove that adopting this healthy and balanced way of eating is not only good for you but enjoyable too.

"The sale of more than 2.5m packs of Bio-Light over the past 15 years would suggest that many people agree with us.

"It would appear that the detox approach followed in the US is not only unhealthy but, as is so often the case, over the top — all the more reason, therefore, for people in the UK to take this 'scaremongering' with a healthy pinch of sesame seeds!"

For more information: Seagreens Food Capsules/Seagreens, 01444 400403; Biofirm/New Nordic, 01452 85511; Bio-Light/Bioconcepts, 0239 249 9133.

