

Understanding a Raw Foods Diet

When people find out they have cancer, they often make healthy changes to their diet and lifestyle. Some people consider a raw foods diet because of the potential health benefits. This handout will go over the potential benefits and concerns of a raw diet to help you decide if it is right for you.

What is a raw diet?

A raw foods diet is also known as a “living foods diet”. It often includes vegetables, fruits, nuts, seeds and sprouts. Food is eaten raw, or uncooked. Some heating is allowed, but foods can only be heated to a temperature of 105°F (40.5°C) or lower to be considered raw. Dehydrated fruits, vegetables or grains can also be eaten, but only if they were not heated to a temperature of 105°F (40.5°C) or higher in the dehydration process.



The number of raw meals eaten each day by people on this diet varies. Some eat one raw meal per day, while others may eat all raw meals.

Why do some people follow a raw diet?

Raw foods have less processing and fewer added ingredients. This is a great advantage over the staples of the typical American diet. Foods such as refined flours and simple sugars have added preservatives and other chemicals.

Enzymes are preserved in raw plant foods. Enzymes are protein molecules found in plants and made by the human body. When plant foods are cooked, the enzymes in the plants are destroyed. Supporters of raw diets believe there are health benefits of eating plant foods with preserved enzymes. However, it should be noted that our stomach acid destroys most of the preserved enzymes in plants when we eat them.

Sprouting may increase the nutritional value of plant foods. Sprouting is the process of repeatedly soaking, then draining and rinsing seeds, grains or beans until they sprout. Some believe that sprouting increases the amount of protein, vitamins and phytochemicals in the food.

What else should I know about a raw diet?

- There is very little scientific evidence that shows a health benefit from a raw diet. Some studies do show that both raw and cooked vegetables can help reduce the risk of various cancers, including cancers of the mouth and throat and breast cancer.

- Raw is not the only “natural” way to eat. Cooking kills many harmful bacteria in foods (for example, Salmonella in raw chicken), making them safe for people to eat.
- Cooking can lower the health benefits of some plant foods. However, cooking can also increase the health benefits. One example of this is lycopene, which is found in tomatoes. Cooking tomatoes actually increases the amount of lycopene.
- More time is needed to shop for fresh, raw foods. It also takes time to soak, wash and prepare the foods. Raw foods also have a shorter shelf-life.
- Sprouting decreases the shelf-life of nuts, grains and legumes. They must be eaten within a few days of sprouting.

Health Concerns



- Raw or undercooked kidney beans and soy beans may contain harmful chemicals. To be safe, do not eat raw, undercooked or sprouted kidney beans or soybeans.
- Those who follow a raw vegetarian diet, over time, have a risk of lower bone mass. This can lead to weak bones that are more likely to break.
- A raw diet may not provide enough of the following nutrients. Be sure to supplement them from other sources, if necessary. For more information, talk with your dietitian.
 - Vitamin B-12 (also known as cobalmin)
 - Vitamin D
 - Calcium



Kidney beans and soybeans should not be sprouted or eaten raw.

Sample Menu

Breakfast

- Fresh Veggie Medley Juice (see recipe below)

Snack

- Fruit and sprouted grain mix (1/3 cup fresh blueberries plus 1/4 cup each: sprouted oat groats, sprouted kamut, sprouted quinoa. Add cinnamon to taste.) Kamut and quinoa are both grains that can be purchased in health food markets and some grocery stores.

Lunch

- Asian Salad with Raw Salad Dressing (see recipes below)

Snack

- 1 medium navel orange

Dinner

- Large vegetable-legume salad (greens/lettuce, mushrooms, zucchini, yellow squash, red bell pepper, red grapes, ½ cup sprouted chickpeas)
- Dressing of equal parts citrus juice and olive oil
- Portobello Mushroom Pizzas (see recipe below)

Nutritional information for sample menu: 2181 calories; 72 gm total fat; 83 gm protein; 343 gm carbohydrate

Recipes

Veggie Medley Juice

This is a good juice for a busy lifestyle. It is loaded with a variety of vegetables, roots and herbs with important vitamins, minerals and phytochemicals. For more information on juicing, see “Juicing Fruits and Vegetables at Home”.

- 6 medium carrots
 - 1 beet (with greens)
 - 3 large tomatoes
 - 1 - 2 large handfuls spinach
 - 1/8 head cabbage
 - 2 - 3 kale leaves
 - ½ -1 red bell pepper
 - 1 large celery stalk
 - 1/4 yellow onion
 - 1/2 clove garlic
 - 1/2 bunch parsley (optional)
- (Spices, such as chili powder or turmeric can be added if desired.)



When buying kale, choose smaller leaves for a milder flavor.

Juice all of the ingredients together. Stir in spice, if desired.

Asian Salad

- 1/4 cup thinly shaved coconut meat
- 1 large celery stalk, chopped
- 1 medium carrot, chopped
- 1/2 medium cucumber, sliced
- 1/4 cup sesame seeds

Combine all ingredients.

Raw Salad Dressing

1/2 cup cashews soaked in 1/4 cup coconut water
1/2 bunch fresh cilantro
2 teaspoon freshly ground flaxseeds
2 tablespoon almond meal (Grind almonds in a food processor until they resemble flour.
Almond meal can also be purchased in some grocery stores.)
1 ounce canned jalapenos, sliced
1-3 teaspoons turmeric powder
4 pineapple chunks plus 3 tablespoons fresh pineapple juice (can use canned)
Salt and pepper to taste

Place all ingredients in a blender and blend until smooth. Store in the refrigerator for up to 48 hours.

Portobello Pizzas

2 Portobello mushroom caps
1 teaspoon olive oil
1/2 teaspoon fresh lemon juice
1/4 medium avocado, sliced
3/4 cup chopped vegetables of choice (for example, olives, tomatoes, red and yellow bell pepper, eggplant, sweet potato)

Using a spoon, remove the ribs from the mushroom caps, and then drizzle with olive oil and lemon juice. Lay avocado slices across mushrooms, then top with vegetable mix and serve. Optional: top with pine nuts or sliced almonds.



Portobello mushrooms are a good source of niacin, potassium and selenium.

For More Information

Living and Raw Foods
www.living-foods.com

The Raw Gourmet
www.rawgourmet.com

Living Light: Making Healthy Living Delicious
www.rawfoodchef.com

Learn Raw Food
www.learnrawfood.com

Raw Food Made Easy by Jennifer Cornbleet (Both DVD and book)