

GOING RAW

Raw-food restaurants and cookbooks are becoming more popular. But does eating more raw foods significantly benefit your body and general health?

the raw-food diet

Raw-food diets are typically based on organic, unprocessed plant foods, such as fruits, vegetables, nuts, seeds, sprouts (from seeds, legumes and grains) and sea vegetables. Meals are uncooked or not exposed to temperatures above 48 degrees. They may include some dehydrated foods, such as crackers and sprouted raw breads for extra texture and flavour.

Some people prefer to go 100 per cent raw, but the fastest growing group of raw-food enthusiasts is that which consumes a high (as opposed to total) raw diet supplying 50–74 per cent raw foods by weight.

why go raw?

Raw diets are lower in kilojoules, contain no cholesterol or trans fat, generally have a lower glycemic index and lack the harmful chemicals that are formed during cooking, such as acrylamide—a chemical that has been shown to cause cancer when ingested in high doses. They can also supply a higher level of certain

disease-fighting phytonutrients, which are “unlocked” by the food enzymes that are destroyed by the increased temperature of cooking.

Studies on raw diets are few in number, but significant improvements have been noted for symptoms of rheumatoid arthritis and fibromyalgia. Advantages in lab tests for heart disease, cancer and diabetes have also been reported. Advocates report higher energy levels, clearer skin, better sleep and easier weight loss.

So you can expect benefits by munching on more raw plant foods. Just make sure that your overall diet includes a variety of foods that provide reliable sources of vitamins D and B₁₂ together with enough fat for good absorption of the fat-soluble vitamins.

While there is no scientific evidence to support the idea that a totally raw-food diet is best, most of us would do well to include one raw-food meal each day. Consider preparing a large salad with a lot of seeds and sprouts and a juicy dressing, and only lightly cooking your vegetables.



Nutritionist Sue Radd is the award-winning author of *The Breakfast Book* and co-author of *Eat To Live*, internationally acclaimed for showing how savvy eating can combat cancer and heart disease and improve well-being. See www.sueradd.com for more nutrition information.