



When steaming food, one is advised to check on it often to prevent over-cooking. Keep in mind that duration for steaming will vary, depending on the food being cooked

Not every food should be eaten raw...

Nutritionist Jamiru Mpima, of Victoria University Hospital in Kampala, warns against eating some foods raw such as eggs, meat and fish, which could expose one to food poisoning because such foods are susceptible to bacterial infestation. "Bacteria like nutritious foods, for example, an egg which is a complete meal. So, we tend to find a lot of bacteria in animal foods compared to plant ones or vegetables," Mpima notes.

Steam the food because this ensures that the food is not in direct contact with fire

One should consult their physician or a nutritionist before choosing to treat a condition with raw food.

- Cook to preserve nutrients for those who fear to eat raw foods, Josette Ssenyu, a public health dietitian, gives the following tips:
- Wash vegetables before slicing them. When one does the reverse, water-soluble vitamins, such as vitamin B and C, are lost in the water.
 - Cut vegetables into big chunks rather than finer ones to reduce the loss of nutrients due to exposure.
 - Prepare vegetables immediately after cutting because, if exposed to the air for long, they suffer from oxidation, which leads to loss of nutrients.

Going raw? the pros, cons of uncooked food

A raw food diet, also sometimes called "raw foodism" is about eating unprocessed or uncooked foods, so that one gets all the nutrients without additives, write **Caroline Ariba and Jaquiline Emodek**

Staring at the large chunk of food supplements she was taking to revive her weakening kidneys, Joyce decided she had had enough. So, she researched about nutrition and alternatives to food supplements. "Guess what, it was food," she says, adding, "But unlike my usual food, this was raw."

It was then that she realised it was raw food bundled into a capsule.

"So, I thought, let me try out these foods in their raw state and see how my body function improves," she tells of the decision that started the process to reverse her kidney function.

"I had to get creative to make it easy to consume these foods, as some live unpleasant tastes."

Over a year later, the woman, who wants her identity to be kept anonymous, has had her kidney function get better, from 30% to 41%.

"Yes, I had lost up to 70% of my kidney function and by surviving on a largely raw food diet, my condition improved," she narrates.

In dealing with the chronic kidney disease, Joyce knew that it was all about stopping the loss of her kidney function. "I know that the kidneys filter wastes, so it was up to me to

RISK
People who maintain a diet of largely raw foods are vulnerable to suffering from malnutrition, due to low amounts of micro-nutrients, such as iron, which are found in animal foods

make sure my body does not have a lot of wastes to be filtered," she explains. She swears by the fact that one way to mitigate this was a raw food diet.

A raw food diet?
Taking on a raw food diet like what Joyce talks about, is what experts call raw foodism. A practice spanning centuries back, raw foodism entails eating uncooked foods or foods cooked at a low temperature. Joyce calls it the decision to eat raw foods in their natural state to harness their nutrients.

"I avoided processed foods and, if I had to cook, then I mostly did brief heating," she reveals, adding that a raw food diet should largely be vegetarian.

Jamiru Mpima, a nutritionist at Victoria University Hospital in Kampala, explains that foods are considered fully cooked when they are subjected to a temperature of 60 degrees Celsius and above. This, he says, should explain why when put in warm water, vegetables are referred to as blanched and not cooked; some thing goes for sun-dried foodstuffs.

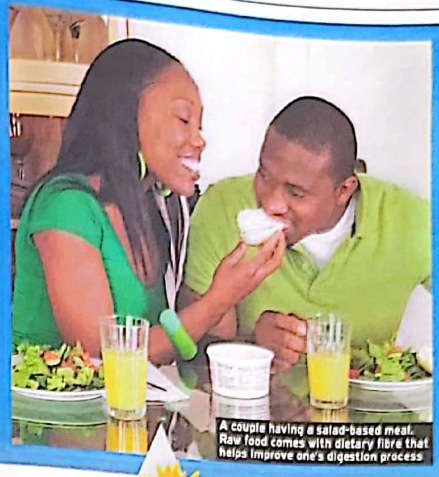
Experts recommend that certain foods, such as cashew nuts, chia seeds, groundnuts and fruits should be consumed raw because some of their nutrient is lost when subjected to heat.

"A typical example is fruits and vegetables because they contain Vitamin C that is sensitive to heat," Mpima says.

He adds that proteins, which are also found in plant seeds are denatured when they are cooked or processed. This explains why meat becomes hard when it is over cooked.

"Proteins have a distinct structure, which enzymes break down. However, when they are denatured, the enzymes will not recognise the nutrient and, as a result, proteins will not be broken down for absorption by the body," Mpima explains.

Importantly, proteins are "raw" foods, for building the body and tissue repair. They are also used in making enzymes, hormones and other body chemicals, as well as muscles, cartilage, skin and blood. Lack of proteins can lead to leishmaniasis. Raw sources of proteins include groundnuts and simsim.



A couple having a salad-based meal. Raw food comes with dietary fibre that helps improve one's digestion process

HEALTH BENEFITS

Stay healthy with raw food

Deborah Wanyize, a nutritionist with the Kamukoya-based Family Health Uganda in Kampala, says raw foodism could help fight ailments by enabling the body to self-heal.

"Food is medicine, but the medicine can only be harnessed if the nutrients are preserved," she notes.

She says a raw food diet helps to prevent inflammation, which is a swelling or pain caused by injury or presence of illness in the body.

"Raw foods also help to keep one hydrated. Many raw foods contain beneficial vitamins and minerals that can help reduce inflammation," she says.

Wanyize adds that a raw food diet also comes with plenty of dietary fibre that helps help improve one's digestion process. "Fibre helps in the removal of toxins from the body, which helps to protect the liver from being overwhelmed with removing toxins from the body."

According to Wanyize, fibre can help in lowering cholesterol, which is linked to heart disease.

"Besides protecting one's heart from cholesterol, eating foods rich in fibre could aid weight loss," she says. She adds: "With fibre in the body, fats are quickly absorbed as opposed to stalling in the gut."

"She calls fibre the busy nutrient that aids in breaking down foods to a point where they are easily moved.

On the other hand, Gibson Euriem, a dermatologist at Skin and Health Clinic in Kasesa, a city suburb, says a healthy body manifests through the skin.

"Raw foods have plenty of enzymes," he says. "Note that without enzymes in one's diet, the body can gather toxins, which make the skin look tired or dull." He then adds that toxins can overwhelm the body and slow down metabolism, which then decreases renewal of the skin cells and speeds up the aging process.

"Metabolism can be defined as the different chemical reactions and processes that keep the cells and organisms in the body in a good state," he says.

Euriem's colleague, Mercy Babigamba, says the one thing that stands out about raw foods is that they are highly hydrating. Cooked foods are drained of their natural hydrating effect," she explains.

Euriem adds: "I often advise my clients to make juice from and blend raw foods with water."

According to Euriem, the benefits of juicing and getting raw nutrients will first show on the skin.

Euriem says enzymes are either digestive, metabolic or food based.

"While the digestive enzymes help in speeding up the food breakdown process for easy absorption, metabolic enzymes aid in replenishment processes in the body," he explains.

"Note that these are made in the pancreas and they are never enough. We do not want an overwhelmed pancreas that, too, could be a danger to one's health." He, therefore, advises that one incorporates raw foods in their diets to supplement on the role of the pancreas.

Speaking about the benefits of nutrition, Dr Elizabeth Kibonoka, the head of the Mwanajumu Nutrition Unit based in Muigwa, notes that some foodstuffs, such as fruits and vegetables, should not be heated. "If you must, then let it be on a low flame," she said. She adds: "When raw, these foods have their nutrients intact and these will smoothen many processes in our body."

She says key among the causes of disease is nutrient deficiency, which is mostly caused by eating foods devoid of nutrients. "One doesn't have to completely go on a raw diet, but just make sure at least the fruits and vegetables that are delicate maintain their nutrients."

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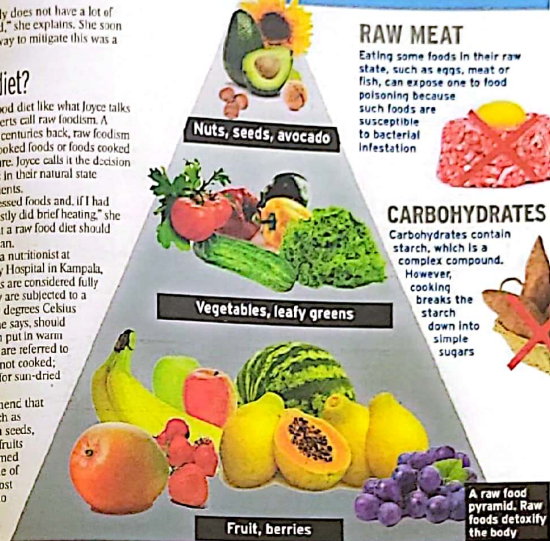
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RAW MEAT

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CARBOHYDRATES

Carbohydrates contain starch, which is a complex compound. However, cooking breaks the starch down into simple sugars

A raw food pyramid. Raw foods detoxify the body

Carbohydrates

However, Mpima notes that there are certain foods that should be cooked. He discloses that carbohydrates taste better when cooked.

"Have you ever tried eating a full plate of raw cassava?" he asks. "No. This is because it is impossible!"

Mpima explains that tubers, such as cassava, cannot be consumed in their raw form in large quantities because they contain carbohydrates, which are not easily digested.

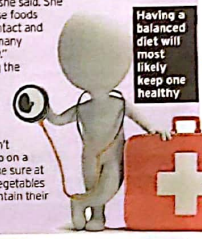
"Carbohydrates contain starch, which is a complex compound. However, cooking breaks the starch down into simple sugars (such as glucose), which can easily be digested and absorbed in the body," he explains.

Tips

Mpima warns that people who maintain a diet of largely raw foods are vulnerable to suffering from malnutrition, especially due to low amounts of micro-nutrients, such as iron, which are commonly found in animal foods. Others include Vitamin B12 and proteins, which are high in animal foods. Therefore, one should ensure a balanced diet at all meals.

"Someone will need broad spectrum multi-vitamins and multi-minerals supplements, which also contain enzymes that will foster the digestion of complex carbohydrates that are usually broken down with the assistance of heat," he explains.

Mpima also advises against putting children on a raw food diet because they might miss out on some nutrients that promote proper growth.



Having a balanced diet will most likely keep one healthy

Make sure that you consult your physician or a nutritionist before choosing to go on a raw food diet. Ideally, people on a raw food diet stay away from processed foods. Many people on the diet also prefer honey to sugar because the former is not processed.

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- Sexual dysfunction
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