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I hear all the time about Detoxification and Cleanses, but what exactly are people talking about?

Our bodies are exposed everyday to numerous sources of toxins – from our food, air and water, and other sources such as plastics, pollution and fumes, hormones and other drugs... Over years of exposure, our bodies accumulate these toxins. Sometimes this accumulation can lead to chronic diseases. So, detoxification is important because it acts as a “reset” button for our body, just like a spring cleaning of your house.



The liver is the main detoxification organ. It filters all of the blood and detoxifies most substances through two processes (phase I and II) that must be in balance. After years of just plain living, these processes become imbalanced. This imbalance varies from person to person. A Naturopathic Doctor can help you determine the imbalance and suggest ways of rebalancing phase I and phase II detoxification processes.

The detoxification organs

The organs of elimination are: the skin, lungs, liver, intestines, and kidneys. Women also have 2 other potential routes of detoxification, menstrual blood and breastmilk. If any of these organs are not working properly, it can be dangerous to start detoxification.

For example: if you are constipated, detoxification is futile if not harmful as toxins are released into the bloodstream but unable to leave the body.

Timing your Detox – Why Spring?

Timing is important for a detox or cleanse. Detoxification uses energy, so when it is cold outside and your body needs to spend energy keeping warm is not a good time for cleansing. Following are some good times to do a cleanse:

- At the change of seasons (i.e. spring, late summer)
- when you have no other obligations (like over a long weekend)
- when you feel that you have a toxic build up or just feel blahh

Note: it is dangerous for pregnant or breastfeeding women, those who have had surgery in the last 3 months, or those experiencing an acute flare-up of a chronic disease (such as MS) to do a detoxification.

A Good Detox

A good detoxification program involves not only nutritional aspects but hydrotherapy and herbs as well. Following we've included some foods and at-home tips for detoxification.

Foods Aiding Detoxification

Detox foods should be easy to digest, hypoallergenic and organic, such as brown rice, steamed veggies, wild salmon, and organic poultry.

Here are some foods that aid detoxification: Beets, artichoke, onions, garlic, leeks, mustard greens, beet greens, kale, chard, sprouts, romaine lettuce, sea vegetables, daikon radish, turnips, figs, apples, bananas.

Note: If you are allergic, or sensitive to any of the above foods, simply do not consume them.

Tip: squeeze a fresh lemon wedge into a glass of warm water and drink first thing in the morning

Hydrotherapy

Dry skin brushing, alternating hot and cold showers, saunas, and castor oil packs are all treatments that can be used for detox.

Tip: Dry Skin Brushing using a loofah start with the soles of your feet. Brush lightly in circular motions always toward your heart, feet to legs, hands to arms, back to abdomen, and neck to chest.

Note: If you have a heart condition or decreased sensation in your limbs (peripheral neuralgia), please consult your registered Naturopathic Doctor before starting hydrotherapy.

Listen to your Body

This is very important when you are doing a detox. Cleansing not only involves the physical body, but the mind too. It takes determination to do a successful detox. If you do not feel well, pay attention to that feeling – your body is telling you something.

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Weight Loss

Obesogenic is a relatively new term that accurately describes the society in which we live. That being, a society where serving sizes and marketing encourage eating quantities of high fat food far beyond our needs, while at the same time encouraging a sedentary lifestyle.

Weight loss is therefore something that plagues many Canadians. But how do you safely go about losing weight? There are so many fad diets and extreme and unsustainable programs out there for losing weight. The problem with most of these programs is that 1) they are not something that can be maintained for life, 2) they don't include lifestyle changes, and 3) they are not individualized.

Therefore, forget about the latest and newest fad diet and consider making nutritional lifestyle changes, for life!

Coping with Food Cravings

When you experience food cravings, your body might be telling you something. For instance, a person that craves sugar, in fact needs to eat more protein, if you crave salt you may need more water.

Our moods can also affect our food cravings; some foods are associated with positive feelings, while others are associated with more negative thoughts. The trick is to have healthy snacks. Indulge in your healthy food cravings. Make sure your body is getting adequate vitamins, minerals and a well balanced diet that is unique for you (the Canada Food Guide may not necessarily work for all of us, some may need more protein than others).

Bran Muffins

- 1 whole wheat flour
 - 2 tsp baking powder
 - ½ tsp baking soda
 - ¼ tsp sea salt
 - 1 C whole bran
 - ½ C soy milk
 - 1/3 C molasses
 - 1 egg, unbeaten
 - ¼ C unsalted butter
 - ½ C chopped dates
1. Combine bran, milk, molasses & let stand until moisture taken up.
 2. Stir together dry ingredients. Add dates to dry mixture
 3. Add egg and butter, beat well and blend into bran mixture
 4. Fill lined muffin cups 2/3 full and bake in oven (400 °F) for about 20 minutes. Yields 10-12 muffins.

Make Fibre your Friend

Are you getting adequate fibre? We should all be consuming 25-35 grams of fibre each day. This is good for the heart, circulation, plays a role in preventing bowel cancers and prevents you from absorbing fats from your diet. If you are not having 2-3 bowel movements a day, there is definitely room for improvement. Psyllium fibre is an easy way to increase your daily fibre intake (have 1 Tbsp in glass of water at the end of the day, followed by a second glass of water).

Exercise Tips

- Exercise regularly; 3-4 times per week
- Vary your exercise; e.g. bike, walk, jog, rollerblade, dance, swim
- At the gym: start with cardio for 5 minutes, weights for 20 minutes, finally cardio for 20 minutes
- Exercise with a buddy, someone you can count on to motivate you!

If you have a heart condition, please consult your Naturopathic doctor before starting an exercise regime

Weight Loss Tips

- Make a plan with realistic and achievable goals, and stick to it!
- Cut out the junk food, saturated fats, and fruit juices
- Cut out the alcohol, it loads on empty calories (i.e. calories, but no nutrients)
- Think portion control; North Americans have been "super-sizing it" for far too long
- Get into a regular exercise regime
- Have 5-6 small meals a day instead of 3 larger meals
- Eat health snacks e.g., nuts, seeds, fruit, fibre-rich muffins
- Drink adequate water → adequate water (oz) = half your weight (lbs)
- Indulge in healthy foods (fruit, nuts, veggies) Filling your fridge with fruits & veggies cut up into portion sizes makes it easy to snack healthfully
- Eat protein with every meal to modify your sweet tooth

Miso Soup

A therapeutic broth with detoxifying, probiotic and immune-enhancing properties.

- 1 yellow onion, chopped
- ½ tsp sesame oil
- 1 celery stalk with leaves, chopped
- 4 cups water
- 4 Tbsp miso
- 2 green onions with tops, sliced

1. Sauté yellow onion in oil for 5 minutes. Add celery and sauté 2 more minutes.
2. Add water, cover and simmer 10 minutes until hot but not boiling. Stir in miso paste and green onions.
3. Remove from heat and whirl in blender.