

Detoxification - What you need to know

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There are many approaches to detoxification. A couple of important points to remember at the outset may be helpful. Short cuts to the process give you short cut results. The process takes time to plan and implement. If you share your household meals with loved ones and/or friends, it is important to include them in the planning stage. They may not elect to participate, but they will be affected by your changes. Group work on this can be helpful. This can cut down on the preparation and can be helpful from a support standpoint.

The detoxification approach that takes a few weeks to complete leads to a deeper cleanse than a simple bowel cleanse. The human body systems function to remove toxins daily, some with our awareness, and others without conscious participation. The body detoxifies on a daily basis through the breath, skin, urine, feces, and tears. The liver plays an important role in this process, not to diminish the roles of other organs, the kidneys, the lungs, and the bowel are also critical. With this in mind, it is important to maintain a lifestyle that encourages and supports ongoing healthy detoxification systems.

A good detoxification program will incorporate appropriate foods to encourage elimination and support the chemical reactions that draw out and package up the toxins. Supplements are often helpful in the process, stimulating these chemical reactions and supporting the restoration to a healthy system. Various forms of hydrotherapy are used to support the process. As always, exercise is essential.

Let's take a look at the body's mechanisms that assist in the process. The skin protects us from allowing toxins in as well as promoting the excretion of toxins. We can however, abuse this organ, by applying inappropriate chemicals which are carried into the body by the bloodstream, or by exposing it to damaging radiation. The factors that allow different levels of absorption are many. Just as we evaluate what we eat (fresh, organic, locally grown whole foods vs. processed and non-organic foods), it is important to consider what we apply to our skin (and scalp). Consider your hair care products, soaps, lotions, deodorants, sun-blocks, and lip balms.

The lungs are often thought of as a means in which we unfortunately take in toxins, and less so as a mechanism for excreting toxins. As the continuous exchange of oxygen and carbon dioxide occurs, the quality of the air we breathe clearly affects the health of our lungs. Smoking is one of the clearest examples of poor air quality leading to poor lung health. Damage to the lungs from exposure to poor air quality hampers lung function not only from the ability to take in oxygen to nourish the cells of the body, but also diminishes the body's ability to reduce the toxic load through exhalation.

The bowel is the most commonly thought of organ in a detox discussion. The gastrointestinal tract plays a critical role in the removal of waste from a somewhat superficial level to much more sophisticated processes. An inappropriately swallowed object such as a penny or a case of food poisoning calls upon many different mechanisms to move the unwanted material out of the system. More chronic practices such as a diet of processed foods, a lack of dietary fiber,

inadequate water intake, or excess alcohol intake can affect the GI system not only acutely but can also impact the health of these organs of digestion and elimination. Supporting these organs to do their work naturally is critical to the detox process, both on a day-to-day basis as well as a focused detox.

The liver plays a central role in the detoxification process. A healthy liver, through an elaborate set of systems, can bring about the breakdown of chemicals, no matter what their route of entry. What we eat, breathe, and apply to skin can affect the liver's function. The mechanisms through which a variety of medications work depends on manipulating some of the chemical reactions that take place in the liver. Supporting or inhibiting the liver's ability to function well and detoxify what runs through it is critical to health.

Kidneys filter the blood. In addition to the creation of urine as waste product, these paired organs are important in mineral balance, vitamin D production, blood pressure regulation, and many other functions. Their role as an organ of detoxification affects the many other roles that they maintain. Maintaining their filtering capacity through appropriate input supports not only appropriate output but the host of these other kidney functions.

So when you are deciding on an approach for a detoxification process, be sure to start by considering the current state of each of these systems of health. Are they functioning to a capacity that will allow a more intense elimination of toxins? Can they handle the extra load that you are about to require of them? What do you need to do to facilitate an enhanced level of function? There are many strategies to enhance the function of these systems, and a few examples are listed below.

Dry skin brushing to stimulate lymphatic function

Castor oil pack to stimulate liver function

Exercise to improve circulation and enhance cellular waste removal

Sauna to enhance elimination of fat soluble toxins and to improve elimination through the skin

Nutritional supplements that support liver detoxification

Hydrolyzed protein supplement to support the liver's activities in detoxification

Fiber source to bind toxins for excretion through the bowel

Adequate water intake to maintain kidney function

Deep breathing exercises to enhance respiratory function

These are examples, and are not intended as recommendations. A focused detoxification process should be completed under the supervision of a health care provider that is familiar with the processes.