
Your Guide to Safe Detoxification

Provided by Kimberly Dalzell, PhD, RD, LD, Program Director, Holistic Nutrition Services
Author of *Challenge Cancer and Win! Step-by-step nutrition action plans for your specific cancer*

For more information: www.challengecancer.com

Many conventional health care providers tend to dismiss the value of detoxification because they don't understand how safe and effective a cleansing program can be. People who have been diagnosed with cancer and seek alternative medical advice usually come across information about detoxification and want to know if detoxification can benefit them. The goals of this guide are to help you understand the general detoxification process and to provide sound nutritional advice that can promote internal purification.

The process of clearing or counterbalancing toxins to improve organ system functioning and to promote optimal health is called detoxification, or body cleansing. Some people choose to fast or purge the body with colonics (enemas), but effective detoxification can be accomplished with diet and lifestyle adjustments.

Your body has many organs that are responsible for freeing the body of waste products. Along with the gastrointestinal tract, the kidneys, lungs, lymphatic system and skin all have specific elimination functions that release toxins. Through a series of actions that either neutralize, eliminate or alter toxic substances, our body cleanses itself in an attempt to prevent the buildup of further waste products.

Cleansing the body for health promotion, to eliminate toxic waste products or to treat disease are all rationales for detoxification. If we all ate and lived in a way that was conducive to disease prevention we would not need to detoxify. But the reality is that most of us eat far too many fats and sugars, take far too many drugs and rely on environmentally unfriendly processes that make our lives easier but contribute to our internal toxicity.

You can begin to detoxify by eliminating or reducing harmful food substances. Read food package labels for potentially health damaging additives and preservatives like sulfites, nitrates and phosphates. Avoid foods made with hydrogenated and partially hydrogenated fats and chemically extracted oils. Refrain from a highly refined sugar diet and avoid artificial sweeteners, colors and flavoring agents. Steer clear of foods that have been genetically engineered or irradiated. Reduce your intake of chocolate, sugar, caffeine, alcohol, tobacco and over-the-counter medications.

A whole foods diet complete with organically grown grains, seeds, nuts, legumes and fruits and vegetables should be consumed to promote cleansing. Start detoxifying your diet by cutting out large portions of red meat and other flesh foods, reducing dairy product consumption and eating more of a vegetarian diet. A more rigorous detox diet is one made up exclusively of raw produce and whole

grains; however, this diet can be difficult to follow and may contribute to negative gastrointestinal side effects. Begin juicing with organic fruits and vegetables and consider adding chlorella or spirulina to your juices. Drink plenty of purified water. Work with a qualified health care professional to determine which level of dietary detoxification you should begin at. Your general health, energy level, current lifestyle and dietary habits all determine which type of diet would be best for you.

Some people benefit from a detoxification program more than others. If you are feeling sluggish, have overindulged in food or have just finished conventional cancer treatment, you may want to begin a detox regimen right away. Remember that if you are in a weakened health condition, suffer from heart problems or have lost a significant amount of weight, you may not be a candidate for certain detoxification practices. The ancient Chinese believe in the importance of seasonal attunement—the process of living in harmony with the changing climatic conditions. The Spring and Autumn are good times to detox by choosing fruits, vegetables and whole grains appropriate to the season.

When you begin to detoxify, you can definitely feel a difference. At first, you may experience symptoms like headache, fatigue, body aches and gastrointestinal disturbances. These symptoms are a normal part of detoxification and should dissipate by the second or third day of your detox program. If these symptoms continue, you should seek the advice of an informed medical professional. Depending on the level of detoxification, you may begin to feel physically lighter, have more energy and have an increased sense of well being.

You may opt to assist the cleansing process through the use of dietary supplements. Psyllium husk and other soluble fibers, along with fructooligosaccharides, acidophilus culture and L-glutamine all promote a healthy gastrointestinal tract. Nutrients used to support liver health include vitamins A, C and E and selenium, zinc, calcium and L-cysteine. Many herbs support the detoxification process as well. Milk thistle, dandelion and yellow dock are all good liver cleansers; cayenne and burdock help to clear the blood; and parsley, goldenseal and marshmallow assist with kidney detoxification.

Don't forget that you can detoxify by changing your lifestyle habits a bit. Exercise helps to sweat out toxins; so does time spent in a sauna or steam room. Deep breathing regimens and meditation to reduce stress help to cleanse the body and mind of clutter. Regular cleansing of the skin and dry brushing the skin on a daily basis removes dead skin cells. Massage therapy stimulates elimination and promotes relaxation. It is imperative to abstain from tobacco products and reduce exposure to chemical contaminants and environmental pollutants.

Your general health condition, along with your dietary and lifestyle habits, all contribute to your internal environment. Programs for specific detox situations should be developed with the assistance of a qualified health care professional. Above all, listen to your body. It will often tell you if it is hurting or healing.