

Supporting Natural Body Cleansing

There are many signs in nature to indicate that spring and summer are a great time to cleanse the body, especially after a winter of warming and nourishing meaty soups and stews. As the sun shines many wild spring greens start to grow in our fields and hedgerows. Dandelions, cleavers, nettles, plantain and other bitter leaves would traditionally have been consumed in salads, juices, teas and general cooking. Even more reason to get outside and enjoy some long walks in the country-side or your local park.



The Theory of Cleansing

The theory behind cleansing is to release any toxic build up in blood and body cells. It is therefore, imperative that elimination systems are working well or these toxins could get stuck in the body potentially causing symptoms such as jittery nerves, nausea, tiredness or acne. The liver is an important organ for processing toxins and the body's main elimination organs are the kidneys, lungs, skin, lymph and bowels.

Lifestyle Considerations

Gentle exercise such as walking or yoga is said to be great at getting the respiratory and lymphatic systems moving to help eliminate any waste products. Body brushing dry skin from the hands and feet towards the heart centre is a lovely way to start the morning. Massage is a wonderful way to stimulate the lymphatic system and is a rewarding treat after the hard work of a body cleanse. Bathing in Epsom Salts (Magnesium Sulphate) is traditionally believed to help draw toxins from the body via the skin, and it is also extremely relaxing to aid a good night's sleep.

The Importance of Gut Health

Maintaining regular healthy bowel movements is essential to remove waste substances and toxins from the body. Many people experience more energy and a sense of general well-being after cleaning their bowel out. The consumption of high fibre foods such as vegetables and salads mix with waste products, and give bulk to stools, while adequate water intake helps the stool mass to stay soft and easy to pass. For those who don't consume enough fibre in their diet or are undertaking a fast, psyllium husk is a gentle fibre supplement known to absorb much more water than other fibres and improve gut transit. Having a balanced gut flora is also important to ensure healthy regular bowel movements. Probiotic intake has been shown in studies to increase bowel movements by up to 50%¹. Prebiotics are non-digestible food ingredients that are selectively fermented by beneficial bacteria in the gut to help their growth². Together probiotics, prebiotics and psyllium husk fibre were shown in a 3 month study to significantly improve stool frequency by over 50%³.

Removal of Toxins through the Urinary Tract

Toxins can also be filtered via the kidneys and removed through the urinary tract where it is said they could cause damage to the lining and inflammation. Therefore, increased water intake is recommended to help flush potential toxins and bacteria from the bladder. Regular urination is a primary defence mechanism against ascending infection.

Support the Liver's Natural Detoxification Process

Vegetable juicing and drinking hot water with lemon is often used to support optimal liver function during a cleanse. Toxins produced from gut pathogens are understood to put extra pressure on the liver, so helping to rebalance the gut flora with a good multi-strain probiotic could be beneficial. A study by Tejero-Sariñena *et al* in 2012⁴, demonstrated the antimicrobial activity of a range of probiotic strains against a range of pathogens. The mechanisms of actions are thought to be the reduction of luminal pH, competition with pathogens for adhesion sites and nutritional sources, secretion of antimicrobial substances, toxin inactivation, and immune stimulation⁵. The consumption of plenty of good quality, organic wholefoods is often recommended to potentially reduce further environmental toxin exposure, alongside adequate protein intake believed necessary to support the liver's natural detoxification process.

Support the Removal of Heavy Metals

Lactic acid bacteria and bifidobacteria have not only been shown to interact directly with viruses, pathogens and toxin producing microbes but also heavy metals, which are reported to pose a threat to human health⁵. Research has shown certain heavy metals to accumulate in body

tissues, damage the gut flora, impair the gut barrier, elevate gut inflammation and are recognised as potential carcinogens⁶. A strong protective gut flora and lining is believed to provide us with some protection against the absorption of toxins and heavy metals⁷. Specific probiotics have also been shown *in vitro* to bind to such heavy metals⁸ and toxins⁵. Studies are looking at the efficacy of specific strains towards specific toxins, although a paper by Halttunen *et al* in 2008⁹, suggested that the use of a combination of probiotic strains may be beneficial when several compounds are to be removed together. These bacteria are known to then be excreted from the body via regular stool movements opposed to being absorbed into the blood stream.

Fight the Cleansing Fatigue

As some cleansing programs can bring with them fatigue it could be useful to support the body's natural production of B vitamins which are essential for energy production in every cell in the body. As water soluble vitamins, they are only present in the body for a short time after consumption of certain foods. To ensure a constant supply of energy a healthy gut microflora supports B vitamin production to retain adequate levels and prevent fatigue.

Conclusion

In summary, to support a healthy body cleanse we recommend drinking at least two litres of water a day, consuming an organic wholefood diet of good quality meat, fish, eggs, a wide range of vegetables and salad⁵, reducing contact with environmental toxins, taking probiotic and prebiotic supplements and if additional fibre is required a supplement such as natural psyllium husks.

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