

Detoxification Revisited

"We detoxify to better our health and vitality, to clear symptoms, and to rejuvenate."

Toxic chemicals easily find their way into our bodies through the air we breathe, the food we eat, and the water we drink and bathe in. There are many new and stronger chemicals polluting our air, water and food. Over one thousand newly created synthesized compounds are introduced every year- - that's three new chemicals every day. The current number of xenobiotics (foreign chemicals) now totals over one hundred thousand and counting!

Although the body is designed to eliminate toxins, it cannot always eliminate synthetic chemicals because our bodies are not adequately equipped with the enzymes to detoxify synthetic chemicals. Recent studies have conclusively demonstrated that every human being alive today is a repository for thousands of man-made chemicals. These chemicals include drugs, pesticides, industrial chemicals, food additives and environmental pollutants. Cancer and cardiovascular disease are associated with toxicity, as well as arthritis, allergies, obesity, and many skin problems.

A toxin is basically any substance that creates harmful effects in the body, undermining our health or stressing organ functions. This may result from patterns of physiology that are different from our usual functioning. Negative emotions can be toxins as well, by changing the normal physiology.

Toxicity occurs in our body when we take in more than we can utilize and eliminate. A toxin may produce an immediate or rapid onset of symptoms, as many pesticides and some drugs do. Even more commonly, it may cause some long-term negative effects, such as asbestos exposure leading to lung cancer. If our body is working well, with good immune and eliminative functions, we can handle our basic everyday exposure to toxins. **Through detoxification, we clear toxins and waste and allow our body to work on enhancing its basic functions.**

Common symptoms of toxic build-up include: headaches, muscles and joint pain, fatigue, irritability, depression, mental confusion, brain fog, gastrointestinal irregularities, weight gain, cardiovascular irregularities, flu-like symptoms, skin rashes, allergies, chronic coughs, and accelerated aging. Recent studies suggest that toxic overload contributes to the development of autoimmune and neurological diseases.

Why Detoxify?

We detoxify to better our health and vitality, to clear symptoms, treat disease, and to rejuvenate. A cleansing program is ideal for helping us to re-evaluate our lives, to make changes, or to clear abuses or addictions. It takes us through our withdrawal and reduces cravings fairly rapidly, and if we are ready, we can begin a new life without the addictive habits or drugs.

What is Detoxification?

Detoxification is the process of clearing toxins from the body or neutralizing or transforming them, and clearing excess mucus and congestion. Many of these toxins come from our diet, drug use, and environmental exposure, both acute and chronic. Internally, fats, especially oxidized fats and cholesterol, free radicals, and other irritating molecules act as toxins. Poor digestion, colon sluggishness and dysfunction, reduced liver function, and poor elimination via skin, lungs and kidneys add to increased toxicity. Our emotions also impact our normal clearing of toxins.

Detoxification involves dietary and lifestyle changes that reduce intake of toxins and improve elimination. Avoidance of chemicals, from food or other sources, refined food, sugar, caffeine, alcohol, tobacco, and many drugs helps minimize the toxin load. Drinking extra water (purified) and increasing fiber by including more fruits and vegetables in the diet are steps in the detoxification process.

When is the Best Time to Detoxify?

Whenever we feel congested, our first step is to follow detox procedures, many of which we can fine-tune over time with our experience of what works for us. Many patients have found that if they start to feel congestion or a cold coming on, then they can exercise and sweat, sauna or steam, drink plenty of fluids, take vitamins C and A, and get a good night's sleep without eating much and they will wake up feeling much better.

Spring is a key time for detoxification; autumn is also important. At least a one to two week program is suggested at these times. It would not be appropriate for those with deficiency problems such as extreme fatigue, underweight people, those who experience coldness, hypoglycemia or those with heart weakness. There are even more contraindications for fasting, which **releases more toxins** than this program does. Releasing too much toxicity can make many sick people sicker; if this happens, they will need to increase fluids and eat again until they feel better. People with cancer need to be very careful about how to detoxify. It is not a good idea to detoxify prior to surgery, it is however a good idea to detoxify after recovering from surgery.

How Do We Detoxify?

There are many levels to detoxification. The first is to eat a non-toxic diet. If we do this regularly, we have less need for cleansing. If we have not been eating this way, we should begin with a non-toxic diet first and then move into more complex detoxification.

The Non-Toxic Diet

- Eat organic foods whenever possible.
- Drink filtered water.
- Eliminate common allergens, such as milk products, eggs, wheat.
- Practice food combining.
- Eat fresh fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes, nuts, seeds, fish, poultry and lean meats.
- Use stainless steel, glass or porcelain cookware.
- Avoid or minimize cured meats, organ meats, refined foods, canned foods, sugar, dairy products, salt, saturated fats, caffeine, alcohol, and nicotine.

Colon cleansing is one of the most important parts of detoxification. Much toxicity comes out of the large intestine, and sluggish functioning of the colon can rapidly produce general toxicity. During a detox program, most people will work on some level with their colon. A series of colonic water irrigations can be the focal point of a detox program. Saunas and sweats are commonly used to help purify the body through enhanced skin elimination. Massage therapy supports our detox program. It stimulates elimination and body functions, promotes relaxation, and clears tensions for a more complete detoxification.

Remember, water should always be used during any type of detox program to help dilute and eliminate toxin accumulations. It is likely the most important detoxifier. Eight to ten glasses a day (depending on activity level) of clean, filtered water are suggested.

The Detox Plan

When I set up detox programs, I carefully evaluate each individual with a history, physical exam, biochemistry tests, dietary analysis, mineral levels, urinalysis and any other specific tests indicated to determine their status. I look at the patient's current state of health, symptoms, and disease as an outcome of their diet and lifestyle, and then considering their health goals, we create the plan together. You can begin a detoxification on your own depending on your health or you may choose to meet with me before you begin.

Best of health to you! Erik Flatland, ND, LAc