

How to detox the body

'Let food be your medicine and medicine be your food' (Hippocrates)

This detox programme is for an initial 7 days. It is a modified fast where we restrict the quantity and quality of foods we introduce into the body to allow it to eliminate excess that has built up over time.

Removal of waste material -detoxification- is essential to the healthy functioning of the body. The body does this daily through the skin through perspiration, lungs through breathing out and sneezing, through urine and stools. During a cleansing programme or fast your body more rapidly recycles materials to build new cells, take apart aged cells and repair damaged cells.

The mode of elimination is called a healing crisis. When food is restricted the body will try to throw out excess matter. The body knows what it needs to eliminate and how, therefore we can't know what our body will do. There are four stages to the cleansing process, addiction (the period of build-up of toxins), growth (the period of ripening superfluous matter), crisis (the period of elimination from the body) and decline (the period for rebuilding and repairing the body).

The healing crisis may appear in the form of nosebleeds, vomiting, urination, perspiration or diarrhea. If the body is able to produce a crisis it will do and if it does it is important not to correct the symptoms with medicines either pharmaceutical or herbal in order to assist the body. We are never certain how the body will choose to respond. Whenever this might occur during the fast, continue the fast for 7 days. If no obvious crisis occurs continue for 10 days. In some cases the feeling of wellbeing may lead to a longer fast, if desired it is possible to continue for a month without any harmful effects.

Detoxing once or twice a year is best undertaken in the spring and autumn when the body naturally tries to detox in harmony with the changes of season. Most people will benefit from this type of fast however those suffering with degenerative disease or taking any kind of medication should first seek agreement of their doctor. Pregnant women should not undergo detoxification.

This vegetable based diet is a semi fast and should be gentle and nurturing for the body. There are other detox techniques such as complete fasting, modified fasting, metabolic cleansing, colonic irrigation, steaming, mud packs, saunas, vitamin C flushes, herbal programmes which all have therapeutic benefits.

You may experience some discomfort for the first few days. Headaches, bad breath, skin breakouts and changes to bowel habits. They are indicators that toxins are being flushed out or that your body is going through withdrawal from caffeine, sugar, alcohol or other substances. This is why it is essential to drink plenty of water. Aim to drink 2 litres a day. At least 1 litre should be pure water and 1 litre of herbal teas. Water should be as chemical free as possible so use filtered or spring water and stop drinking 20 mins before a meal and wait for 1 hour after. One cup of herbal tea can be drunk soon after a meal but avoid filling the stomach with liquid.

If you experience skin problems, take warm baths and add a handful of himalayan salt, also massage the skin with a soft brush. Constipation should be avoided as that is the main evacuation method of toxins. If you are constipated you could use an enema (more info can be provided). Add coarse oatmeal to the diet and eat 1 tablespoon of linseed (whole or ground) with every meal and take 2 tablespoons before bed with a herbal tea and if you can stand it, add 2 tablespoons of olive oil. Dandelion root tea is particularly useful to keep the bowels moving and to support the liver gently during detoxification. My recommended digestive tea is to boil dandelion, chicory and licorice root with some cinnamon bark, 1 tablespoon of herb in a pan with 1 litre of water and boil for 10 mins and drink freely throughout the day.

While on the detox suspend taking any vitamin and mineral supplements you may use regularly. Also herbal tinctures are best suspended. Herbal teas are fine to continue with.

The positive effects of the detox programme should be evident on the second day with an improved sense of well being, lightness of stomach, improved bowel movements and uplifted mood. It is important to keep up any spiritual practices at this time and take note of any insights you may receive due to the detoxification of mind and body together. Lots of walks in the fresh air and long sleeps, including siestas are all important to help the body to detox. Avoid stressful activities and negative emotions, this may mean avoiding TV watching and social media.

You may need to eat more often to keep blood sugar levels normal but don't over-eat at any meal. While eating avoid negative conversations, looking at TV, phone or computer and pay attention to all your senses, listening to music if that helps, eat with gratitude and chew well. Take your time to eat.

No special changeover diet is necessary after the programme but it is good not to eat in excess and gradually add foods over the following week introducing dates and protein like quinoa, pulses, chicken and fish.

References:

The Mohsin Institute, Hakim Salim Khan
'The Traditional Healer's Handbook' by Hakim G.M. Chishti
'Digestive Wellness' by Elizabeth Lipski
'The healing crisis' by Bruce Fife
'Your body's many cries for water' by F Batmanghelidj

Detoxification Foods (Keep this list handy)

Vegetables

asparagus, avocado, alfa alfa shoots, aubergine, beetroot, broccoli, carrot, cabbage, celeriac, cauliflower, celery, chard, cucumber, courgette, garlic, green beans, kohlrabi, kale, mushrooms, onion, parsnip, pepper green is better than red, chilli peppers, pakchoi, peas, *potato (white)*, radish, spinach, swede, turnip, tomato, all salad leaves; lettuce, rocket, endives, chicory, watercress, mustard greens.

Seeds

Pumpkin, sunflower, sesame, linseed

Nuts

Brazil nuts (optional if needed)

Grains

course oatmeal (optional if needed)

Dressings and seasonings

olive oil, lemon juice, himalayan or sea salt, black pepper, all herbs particularly fresh basil, dill, parsley, chives and coriander

Dairy

natural yoghurt (optional if needed) can be used to make salad dressings with fresh herbs

Drinks

green herb teas only (chamomile, peppermint, dandelion etc)
lots of water

The principle of this diet is to only consume foods directly necessary to sustain life. The foods listed are composed primarily of water (80-90%) and are high in vitamins and minerals. Try to consume only the above foods, the list is long considering it is called a form of fast. There are no or few sugars and few carbohydrates which the body can convert into sugar.

This list provides the basis of the diet, the optional items may be used if desired but in small quantities. Although white potato is on the list try and limit its use or manage without. Substitutes are sweet potato or butternut squash, however these are high in sweetness and are very nourishing so use them only if you're not managing with the basic list. Spices are not on the list as they alter the temperament of foods however some black pepper is beneficial if desired. Use herbs instead to flavour dishes.

Aim for organic as much as possible, otherwise you are adding toxins to the diet. Prepare all meals from fresh and raw veg, avoid dried, frozen and tinned foods

Only sea salt or Himalayan pink salt should be used. Do not use it when cooking. A pinch can be added to your meal before eating.

Tips for survival:

Roast vegetables (carrots and parsnips) in olive oil and keep for a snack

Have plenty of green salads ready and store some grated carrot and beetroot in the fridge ready to add.

Make a large quantity of homemade coleslaw to keep in fridge. Use red cabbage, carrot, beetroot, celery or fennel, spring onion, pepper dressed with olive oil, lemon juice and some natural yoghurt.

Toast seeds and keep them in a jar for a snack

A few brazil nuts will keep you going with fats and protein as well as magnesium.

Avocados make a great breakfast.

Steamed greens especially spinach, chard, broccoli, kale can be eaten as a snack with a little olive oil and lemon.

If you have a juice maker, use it every day (celery, carrot, beetroot, spinach, kale)

Make pesto for the whole week using ground pumpkin seeds, garlic, basil, mint, olive oil.

Other recipe ideas...

Cauliflower with spinach/chard (optional potato)

courgette, onion and pesto

stir fry with pakchoi, onion, pepper and mushroom

minestrone soup with peas, celery, carrot, onion, green beans, courgette and tomatoes

pea and mint soup

carrot and fresh herbs soup

root veg soup

mashed swede

Plan your meals and prepare for the next day so when you're hungry there is something to eat and you don't give up!

Example of a day...

pre breakfast : 2 mugs of warm water

breakfast: vegetable juice and an avocado, coleslaw, toasted seeds

snack: steamed broccoli, raw carrot and celery

lunch: large green salad, steamed greens, toasted seeds, green beans

snack: left over roasted root veg or raw veg

supper: courgette, leeks and green pepper cooked in tomatoes and herbs