11 WAYS to Detoxify Your Mind and Body

By Sayer Ji

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By GreenMedInfo Research Group

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11 WAYS TO DETOXIFY YOUR MIND AND BODY

If you're not actively detoxifying, you're actively accumulating toxins that can bog you down, leading to stagnation in your mind and disease in your body. Get ready to experience renewed energy, lightness and mental clarity by optimizing your body's detoxification processes using 11 straightforward, everyday practices.

BY SAYER JI

Every day, your body is under assault from unhealthy foods, stress and other environmental toxins, contributing to dysfunction in your mind and body. If you feel sluggish, bloated and foggy-headed, detoxification may help restore equilibrium by resetting your body to a state of health instead of disease.

This is a two-step process, the first being to stop adding in harmful things. If you've started my Regenerate Rx program, you've probably already made some progress down this road, but minimizing toxic exposures is something that you'll need to work on daily. **The second step is engaging in intentional activities to support your body's avenues of detoxification** — of which there are many.

When I speak about detoxification, this is what I'm referring to: ramping up your own body's innate processes for waste and toxin removal and regeneration. You may see mainstream media outlets refer to purposeful detoxification and cleanses as "dubious"[1] or even hoaxes, largely because your body is already built to remove hazardous substances.

While it's true that your body is incredibly capable of detoxification, it can easily be overrun by the onslaught of physical and emotional toxins that surround most of us on a daily basis. This is particularly true if you're one of the 6 in 10 U.S. adults already suffering from chronic disease.[2]

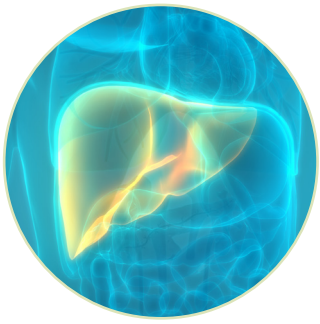
Chronic lung disease and kidney disease — two of the leading causes of death and disability in the U.S. — directly affect your body's ability to process waste and pollutants, while others, like heart disease, cancer and diabetes, are indirectly related. If you have heart disease, for instance, it affects the health of your kidneys,[3] and diabetes is the No. 1 cause of kidney disease — 1 in 3 adults with diabetes also has kidney disease, which takes a toll on their ability to effectively detoxify.[4]

Everything is interconnected, and this includes the top contributors to chronic diseases, such as poor nutrition and excessive alcohol use — common factors that necessitate additional detoxification support. The good news is, there's a lot you can do to encourage your body's innate ability for detoxification, starting with understanding how the process works in the first place.

THE THREE MAJOR DETOXIFYING ORGANS

On a physical level, your body's goal is to maintain homeostasis, which is done with the support of the three major organs for detoxification:

1. LIVER



Your liver performs more than 500 functions and may hold about 13% of your blood supply at one time.[5] Blood from your digestive organs enters your liver, along with nutrients, medications and toxins stored therein. Your liver processes these substances and either releases them back into your blood or sends them to your bowel so they can be eliminated.

Your liver also helps to metabolize proteins, converting amino acids so they can be used as energy, carbohydrates or fats. Toxic byproducts, including ammonia, are created during this metabolism, but your liver converts it into the less toxic urea, which is then sent into your bloodstream to be eliminated by your kidneys.[6]

2. KIDNEYS

Right now, your kidneys are hard at work filtering your blood, separating toxins from nutrients. Substances your body can use — such as vitamins, proteins and minerals — are sent back into your bloodstream while waste products and extra water are used to make urine, which is sent to your bladder to be excreted from your body.

Every minute, your kidneys filter about 1/2 cup of blood,[7] making them, arguably, the most important organ in your body for the elimination of toxins. As noted by Joseph Pizzorno, N.D., editor in chief of Integrative Medicine: A Clinician's Journal:

"Most consider the kidneys second only to the liver in importance for toxin elimination. However, considering that 20% to 25% of cardiac output goes through these tiny organs, allowing them to filter the blood a remarkable 60 times per day, a case could be made that they are actually more important than the liver for toxin elimination.

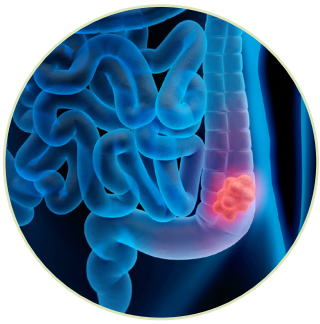
They rid the body of unwanted products of metabolism such as ammonia, urea, uric acid, creatinine, end products of hemoglobin metabolism, and hormone metabolites; toxins that have been made water soluble by phase 2 in the liver; and direct excretion of industrial toxins, such as heavy metals and a number of new-to-nature molecules. They also excrete nutrients or food constituents when consumed in excess, such as salt, vitamin C, B vitamins, and others."[8]

However, as Pizzorno explains, some toxins filtered by your kidneys are not easily eliminated via urine and instead accumulate in your kidneys, causing damage:

"Unfortunately, we are now exposed to such a high toxic load in the modern world that loss of function with aging … is considered 'normal.' A 90-year-old has only one-third to one-half of the kidney function of a 20-year-old. This means a significant decrease in ability to rid the body of many toxins and helps explain why almost everyone becomes sicker with aging. Once again, 'normal' is not healthy."[9]

This helps explain why it's so important to not only reduce your exposure to toxins, thereby easing the burden on your body's organs of detoxification, but also to support active detoxification as much as possible.

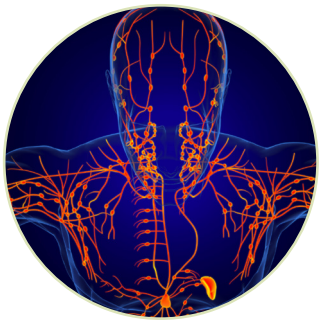
3. COLON



The food you eat is broken down in your small intestine, where nutrients are removed and absorbed into your bloodstream. The leftover food residue travels to your large intestine, or colon, which processes the remaining waste into stool, which is then eliminated from your body.[10]

If your digestive system isn't functioning optimally, this waste removal process can be impaired. Chronic constipation is common, affecting 16% of U.S. adults, and 33.5% of those over the age of 60.[11]

LUNGS, SKIN AND LYMPHATIC SYSTEM: OTHER IMPORTANT DETOX ROUTES



Waste removal and toxin filtration is incredibly important, which is why your body has multiple routes of detoxification. Your lungs are among them, as they act as an important filter, providing defense against inhaled toxins.

Each day, your respiratory tract is exposed to about 10,000 liters of air,[12] filled with any number of pollutants. Your lungs are coated in a highly viscous "mucous blanket" that acts as the first line of defense against inhaled toxins.

There's also the "mucociliary escalator," which works via hair-like projections called cilia. Debris and toxins are trapped in the mucus, then moved via the cilia's sweeping motions into the central airway, where the mucus may be swallowed (to be dealt with by your digestive system) or removed via coughing or spitting.[13]

Your skin — your body's largest organ — also assists in detoxification by eliminating toxins via sweat. There's also your lymphatic system, which is made up of lymphatic vessels, tiny tubes that collect lymph fluid through your lymph nodes, which contain immune cells.

As part of your immune system, your lymphatic system helps attack and remove bacteria, viruses and abnormal cells, including those that may turn into cancer, from your body.[14]

This effective waste removal system has no built-in pump to keep lymph fluid flowing, so it relies on movement instead. When your muscles move, the contractions act as a pump to move lymph fluid throughout your body, through your bloodstream and kidneys so waste products can be removed via your urine.[15]

CUTTING OUT TOXIC EXPOSURES

It's difficult to quantify how many toxins you're exposed to each day, as they come in many forms and fluctuate based on your activities and environment. A review by the Environmental Working Group, however, revealed up to 420 carcinogens have been detected in people via biomonitoring studies, which provide a window into toxic exposures.[16]

And this just represents one type of toxin. From pesticide residues on your food and flame-retardant chemicals in your electronics to fluoride in your drinking water and radiation emitted by your cellphone, you can't eliminate toxic exposures entirely, but you can take steps to reduce them. The lower your toxic burden becomes, the easier it will be for your body to keep up with waste and toxin removal.

I've covered some of the most important toxins to avoid in Regenerate Rx, my program for triggering your body's inherent mechanisms for resilience. These include biologically incompatible foods, such as wheat and cow's milk, synthetic ingredients like monosodium glutamate and artificial sweeteners, and medications that aren't absolutely necessary, which may include statins and over-the-counter pain relievers.

Common environmental chemicals to reduce as much as possible include pesticides, flame retardants, fluoride, heavy metals and phthalates. Eating organically grown, whole foods, filtering your water and choosing natural personal care products and nontoxic cleaning supplies are some of the most basic — yet also most effective — steps to reducing your toxic load.

Stress relief must also be incorporated, as emotional stress is one of the most damaging toxic exposures of all.[17]

KICKSTART DETOXIFICATION IN ONE TO THREE DAYS USING APPLES AND WATER

If your elimination is sluggish or you're struggling with constipation, a simple bowel cleanse can help to restore healthy bowel movement. You don't need to purchase any elaborate cleansing kits to do this. Instead, focus on your diet.

First, eliminate wheat, dairy, corn and soy, which are among the most common food intolerances and may contribute to constipation. Cutting out all processed convenience/junk foods is a necessary step toward this. Then increase fresh fruits and vegetables, which are rich in fiber and antioxidants for healthy elimination.

For a more advanced reset, you can follow the Apples and Clean Water Mono Diet described in Regenerate Rx, which involves consuming only organic apples and pure water for one to three days, during which your metabolism will reset and your body will have energy to devote to deep-cleaning. This process also stimulates autophagy, which is your body's way of clearing out damaged cells and making room for new ones.[18]

Why apples? They're a perfect source of plant stem cells and exclusion-zone, or EZ, water[19] — structured water that may be especially beneficial for human health. They also contain pectin, a soluble fiber that promotes detoxification of heavy metals[20] and was even used to significantly decrease radioactive caesium-137 load in children living in Southern Belarus, near the 1986 nuclear power accident at Chernobyl.[21]

Water is an important component here. It's said so often that it's practically cliché, but drinking more water truly is a key to good health, and one that's essential for proper detoxification. Gerald Pollack, Ph.D., professor of bioengineering at the University of Washington, suggested that, when based on the percentage of individual water molecules, your body may be 99% water,[22] hinting at its immense importance.

Dehydration is harmful to your kidneys,[23] and your liver also needs water to function, so if you don't drink enough you're hampering two of the most important detox avenues in your body.

How much water is "enough" is up for debate, but rather than relying on a set amount, which will vary based on your age, health and activity level, use your urine as a guide: if it's nearly clear, you're probably well hydrated but if it's darker in color you may need to drink more water. And, as always, if you feel thirsty, this is a definite sign to take a drink.

Remember, the source of your water matters. Drinking regular tap water and bottled water will add to your toxic load, so you'll want to instead choose pure water. I recommend water from underground springs, as they may be a source of EZ water.

Sunlight-infused water in a glass container is also recommended, but if you don't have this, filter tap water using a reverse-osmosis filtration system and then add minerals back in using a pinch of Himalayan salt.

FREE YOUR BODY'S DETOXIFICATION POWERS WITH FASTING

You've probably experienced that tired, sluggish feeling that creeps up after you've eaten a big meal. That feeling may occur, in part, because blood flow is being directed to your digestive system, and away from your brain, in order to break down and process all of that food, resulting in sleepiness.[24] Giving your body a break from digestion frees it up to do some housekeeping while providing a number of additional benefits.

This is as simple as fasting, or refraining from eating, for a defined period of time. Though it may sound intimidating, you can start by fasting for just eight to 12 hours between meals, which includes the time you're sleeping, then gradually extending it for longer periods.

Fasting induces autophagy,[25] one of the most important steps toward detoxification, as during autophagy nonfunctional proteins, intracellular pathogens and damaged organelles are eliminated.[26] In addition, fasting is known to:

- Trigger the synthesis of detoxification enzymes[27]
- Enhance phase II detoxification,[28] during which your liver changes toxic substances into less toxic ones that are easier to excrete[29]
- Possibly increase the rate at which ROS (reactive oxygen species) are detoxified[30]

In addition to supporting detoxification, fasting leads to significant reductions in weight and blood pressure, along with decreases in blood sugar levels and an increase in physical and emotional well-being.

Even during longer fasts of four to 21 days (during which 200 to 250 kcal were consumed daily), 93.2% of participants reported no feeling of hunger and less than 1% of participants experienced adverse effects.[31] For those interested in a more advanced form of detoxification, a one- to three-day water fast is worth exploring.

Longer fasts should only be performed in partnership with a trusted health care practitioner, particularly if you have a chronic health condition, however, I recommend practicing some type of caloric restriction once a week. This may be as simple as skipping breakfast one morning.

11 EVERYDAY METHODS FOR HEALTHY DETOX

Small, consistent changes can lead to big improvements in your health by supporting your body's natural detoxification pathways. In addition to fasting, incorporate as many of the following methods into your regular routine as possible — the more, the better, but don't get overwhelmed.

These include methods to not only detoxify your physical body but also your mind, giving it a break from stress, anxiety, negative self-talk and racing thoughts. Start slow and gradually embrace the cleansing methods that work best for you.

1. CONSUME DETOXIFYING SUPERFOODS

The importance of diet for optimal detoxification cannot be overstated. What you put in your body is just as important as what you don't, and the foods and supplements that follow are especially potent for detox:

- **Cruciferous vegetables** — Broccoli, kale, Brussels sprouts, cabbage and other cruciferous vegetables are rich in sulforaphane, a sulfur-rich compound known for its detoxification effects. Broccoli sprouts, in particular, are known to induce enzyme systems that detoxify carcinogens.[32]

  Even adding broccoli or Brussels sprouts to a meal of cooked meat, known to create carcinogenic heterocyclic aromatic amines, led to lower levels of the carcinogens in participants, suggesting that theses vegetables help your liver clear chemicals from your body. What's more, the boost to liver function appeared to remain even two weeks later.[33]

- **Beets** — Beets, with their natural nitrate, cause blood vessels to dilate, increasing blood flow. As Pizzorno noted, "Increasing blood flow to the kidneys has a huge impact on improving detoxification and decreasing oxidative stress," and an animal study found beetroot juice improved blood flow to the kidneys by up to 26%.[34]

- **Dark chocolate** — Dark chocolate improves oxygenation of the kidneys, and the benefit increases with higher catechin levels[35] (catechins are a type of beneficial plant compound known as flavonoids).

- **Blueberries** — Anthocyanins in blueberries protect your kidneys from oxidative stress and endotoxins derived from the bowel.[36]

- **Curcumin** — Curcumin, the active ingredient in the spice turmeric, is protective for your kidneys[37] and liver,[38] and has known detoxification effects, including against mercury.[39] Curcumin may also help repair and regenerate liver tissue.[40]

- **Ginkgo biloba** — Ginkgo biloba is protective against mitochondrial toxins and also protects the kidneys from a range of toxins, including mercury, uranium, gut-derived endotoxins and even the ubiquitous pesticide glyphosate.[41]

- **Ginger** — Ginger is also protective of the kidneys, enhancing function and offering protection against cadmium and other toxins by decreasing inflammation and oxidative damage.[42]

- **Organic coffee** — Coffee has a beneficial effect on liver health and regeneration. In an animal study, liver regeneration was stimulated by feeding a diet supplemented with up to 7% (by weight) of ground green and roasted Brazilian or Hawaiian (Kona) coffee.[43] Further, increasing coffee consumption by 2 cups daily nearly halved the risk of liver cirrhosis.[44] For best results, consume coffee only in the morning.

- **Probiotics** — Probiotics, found in naturally fermented foods and in supplement form, help you maintain a healthy microbiome, essential for proper elimination. Beyond that, certain beneficial bacteria have a powerful ability to bind to heavy metals including aluminum, cadmium, lead and arsenic so they can be eliminated via feces.[45]

- **Selenium** — Selenium is an essential cofactor for glutathione peroxidases, which are enzymes essential for detoxification.[46] Selenium plays a role in protecting cells from oxidative damage and also helps with heavy metal detoxification.[47] It's important not to overdo selenium, however selenium-rich foods like Brazil nuts and wild-caught seafood can support healthy detox.

- **Prunes** — If constipation is a problem for you, eating prunes (100 grams daily) for three weeks may help you to eliminate more often while improving the consistency of your stool.[48] Prunes were better for relieving constipation than even psyllium, which is another form of fiber that also enhances elimination (if you try psyllium, be sure to consume it with plenty of pure water).

2. ENGAGE IN DAILY INTENTIONAL MOVEMENT

Staying active — whether that be a walk around your neighborhood, a high-intensity workout or engaging in some vigorous yard work — is necessary for your body's regular detoxification processes to function optimally. Lymph flow, for instance, increases two- to three-fold during exercise compared to when you're at rest.[49]

If you're obese, it can cause dysfunction in this important system, but staying active improves lymphatic function even in cases of obesity-induced lymphatic dysfunction — and this benefit occurs even without associated weight loss.[50]

Jumping, such as on a trampoline, is especially beneficial for lymphatic health, as the resulting changes in G forces that occur may boost circulation of your lymphatic system, supporting detoxification.[51]

Activity also supports regular bowel movements, which is why exercise may be an effective treatment option for constipation,[52] just one more way that it supports homeostasis in your body. Taking a walk after a meal is one simple habit to get into that will facilitate digestion and elimination.

Exercise even increases blood flow to your lungs,[53] supporting their role as a filter for inhaled particles, while optimizing mental health.[54] And the sweat that you work up during intentional movement is also a form of cleansing.

3. SWEAT

When you sweat, toxins like arsenic, cadmium, lead and mercury are excreted in appreciable quantities via your skin.[55] Phthalates are also excreted into sweat.[56] So physical activity or sauna usage[57] that induces sweating is an important tool for removing toxic elements from your body. Even eating ginger can help you break a sweat.

4. DRY SKIN BRUSHING

Dry skin brushing is an ancient Ayurvedic practice that comes from the Sanskrit word garshana, which means "friction by rubbing."[58] Using a stiff-bristled dry brush, gently brush your skin using circular motions, which boosts your blood

circulation and supports lymphatic drainage.[59] Start near your feet and move your way upward toward your heart.

Dry skin brushing is also exfoliating and helps open your pores, making it easier for toxins to be released when you sweat. Try dry skin brushing about three times a week, right before a shower. If irritation occurs, choose a brush with softer bristles and decrease the frequency.

5. Therapeutic Massage

The therapeutic kneading of muscles and soft tissues is a healing practice for your mind and body. While improving circulation and stimulating your lymphatic system for optimal detoxification, massage also reduces muscle tension and promotes a state of deep relaxation and a reduction in stress hormones.[60]

Regular therapeutic massage is therefore useful for detoxing your mind along with your physical body. Essential oils including peppermint, lemon and citrus can be added to your massage oils to enhance the experience.

6. Meditation

Meditation is invaluable when you need to clear out negative emotions and harmful self-talk from your psyche. It's also useful as a daily practice to support mental calm and well-being. Meditation is cleansing for your spirit and increases decentering, which is known to reduce distress.[61]

Meditation combined with exercise may be particularly effective and can reduce both stress and rumination while enhancing quality of life, even in medical students, who are often highly stressed with little time for proper self-care.[62]

7. Yoga

Daily yoga is an ideal form of exercise to help rid both your mind and body of toxins. A systematic review of 12 studies found a variety of yoga practices (Hatha yoga, Bikram yoga, Kundalini yoga, Sudarshan Kriya yoga, Kripalu yoga and Yin yoga) led to stress reduction among healthy adults,[63] while yoga also promotes positive body image[64] and helps relieve depression, in part by helping to interrupt negative thinking.[65]

Bikram yoga, which is performed in a room heated to 105°F with 40% humidity,[66] further promotes sweating and increases circulation, and has also been found to lead to higher satisfaction levels when it comes to the basic psychological needs of competence, autonomy and relatedness or a connection with others.[67]

Certain yoga poses may be particularly beneficial for restoring balance to your body and optimizing detoxification. Twists, for example, may activate and detoxify your liver[68] while bridge pose is supportive of your lymphatic system.[69]

8. Raw Fruits and Vegetables

When you're feeling a need to enhance your body's detoxification, try eating only raw fruits and vegetables for a period of three days. Depending on your typical diet, this will give your body a break from processed foods while providing an abundance of nourishing fiber, vitamins, minerals and phytonutrients, which may be protective of your colonic gastrointestinal health.[70]

Raw fruits and vegetables are also associated with better mental health, including fewer depressive symptoms and higher positive mood, life satisfaction and feeling of "flourishing," even compared to consuming cooked or canned fruits and vegetables,[71] so when you devote your diet to them for a few days you can expect to feel lighter both physically and mentally. The top 10 raw foods for better mental health are as follows:[72]

- Carrots
- Apples
- Grapefruit
- Citrus fruits
- Cucumber
- Bananas
- Dark leafy greens such as spinach
- Lettuce
- Fresh berries
- Kiwi

9. Unplug and Ground

Unplug as much as possible — including disconnecting from social media, turning off the news and avoiding electromagnetic fields (EMFs). U.S. adults may check their cellphones 52 times a day, while teens may check social media accounts 100 times daily.[73] Social media usage can be associated with depression and anxiety symptoms,[74] while exposure to negative news is also linked to negative emotions.[75]

Tuning out the onslaught of media headlines, social media comparisons and information overload gives your mind a chance for rest and recuperation. Exposure to EMFs is also known to increase oxidative stress in various tissues, including the liver and kidneys,[76] which has unknown effects on your body's detoxification processes.

While you're unplugged, use it as an opportunity for grounding, also known as Earthing, which simply means letting your bare feet come in contact with the Earth or any natural surface, like grass or sand. This gives you access to electrons on the surface of the Earth, which helps reduce inflammation, pain and stress[77] while offering some protection from EMFs' negative effects.[78]

10. Journal

If your mind feels heavy, open a journal and put your thoughts down on paper. This simple process provides a cathartic release that will help clear your mind of negative thoughts and emotions. If racing thoughts keep you up at night, writing a specific to-do list — including tasks you need to complete in the next few days — at bedtime can help you fall asleep faster.[79] Sleep, meanwhile, is another requisite for healthy detox.

11. Sleep

To properly support toxin removal, make high-quality sleep a priority. During sleep, cerebrospinal fluid in the brain increases, flushing out waste products that accumulate between brain cells.[80] Slow electrical oscillations, or waves, in your brain that occur during deep sleep may be especially important for driving the flow of cerebrospinal fluid for toxin removal,[81] which may have implications for the buildup of toxic proteins, such as amyloid-beta, linked to Alzheimer's disease, for starters.

DETOXIFICATION IS A LIFESTYLE, NOT A FAD

The term detox has gotten an unfairly bad rap after being associated with fad diets and cleansing trends. If you've completed some of the recommendations above, resist the urge to assume your body is "done" with detoxifying.

Detoxification is an ongoing process — not something that's "completed" after a brief fast or cleanse. You'll experience the best outcomes if you make the choices that support detoxification — like daily intentional movement, healthy sleep and whole foods — a lifestyle.

If you're new to detox strategies, starting off with an induction phase, like the Apples and Clean Water Mono Diet, will be important to reset your system and jumpstart the cleansing process. From there, you can begin to reintroduce nourishing whole foods, taking care to eliminate processed convenience foods and avoid other toxic exposures in your environment as much as possible.

Core supplements can then be added in strategically to support your health goals, followed by ongoing daily practices, such as yoga and meditation, to support the release of toxins from your body and mind. As your body continues to clear accumulated waste and toxins, you'll feel lighter with a renewed sense of optimism and mental clarity.

Ultimately, by honing your body's ability to detoxify and no longer being beholden to disease-causing waste and mind-numbing stress, you'll become free to live life to the fullest in every facet.

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