

Ask Mercedes

by Lorraine Mercedes Picot, RNCP, ROHP, nd



Q.: Do I really need to do a detox? I read about this everywhere. Doesn't our body already do a good job of cleaning itself out? What's up with cleanses and detox – is it just another fad? *Phil S., Westmount, Quebec*

A.: Dear Phil;

Thanks so much for your email. I love questions like this. When you hear the word "detox", some of you may be thinking drug or alcohol detox but I'm betting it's not rehab Phil is asking about. You're so very right in noting that the body already does an incredible job of cleansing itself. Consider that it works non-stop to detoxify one hundred and four trillion cells by way of your liver, kidneys, urine, feces and even through breath and perspiration. How can we not be amazed at our body's ability to eliminate or neutralize toxins both from our internal metabolic functions and from external sources?

Despite this sophisticated detoxification system, our bodies need help removing toxins more than ever before. The world is a different place than it was 40-50 years ago. We're being exposed to substances the body has never seen before. Because of our environment and our fast paced eating habits, we easily overwhelm our natural detoxification process beyond its limit. Toxic overload robs us of our energy and well-being, and compromise our body's ability to ward off disease.

Since the Second World War, close to 80,000 new synthetic chemicals have entered our environment and many of these have never even been tested for safety. Our drinking water alone contains hundreds of chemicals. Your average newborn baby has close to 300 toxins in his or her umbilical cord blood! Our cells are exposed to millions of pounds of toxic chemicals in a single year including mercury, PCB's, styrene, dioxins, acrylamide, methyl bromide, etc., etc. Of the hundreds of pesticides commonly used in growing our food, a large percentage has been classified as carcinogens.

Many diet and lifestyle factors increase our level of toxicity: eating lots of sugar, refined foods, hydrogenated and trans fats, food additives and preservatives, artificial colours and flavours, coffee and alcohol, a sluggish liver, the use of prescription or over-the-counter drugs, chemically derived grooming products and perfumes, chronic constipation, lack of exercise, and the list goes on. In a cleansing diet, generally, all fats, heavy proteins such as animal products, refined sugars, dairy products, and processed foods are eliminated for a period of *6 to 10 days or longer*.

Most holistic health professionals agree that the best time to do a cleanse or detox is Spring or Fall. According to traditional Chinese medicine, spring represents *growth*, the *colour green* and *rejuvenation*. It's said to be the best time of the year for liver and gall bladder function – two major organs of elimination. The *liver* filters blood, hormones, and waste products with our kidneys playing a crucial role eliminating excess fluids and toxins, as well as excreting the by-products of protein metabolism, urea and ammonia.

Timing is crucial to the success of any detox. Pick out a time when there is downtime in your social and work calendar. It's always a great idea to get lots of relaxation and rest while cleansing. The body works really hard while detoxing so avoid stressful situations and heavy physical work or exercise.

At this point, you're probably curious to know what you could expect from a spring detox. Most of my clients report above all else feeling more energy and alertness. Many find that they sleep more soundly and experience better digestion and easier elimination. I've personally seen amazing improvements in skin health in cases of acne or eczema. Improvements in joint stiffness and allergy symptoms are common. Long term benefits can include weight loss, better resistance to colds and flu and improvements in blood pressure and cholesterol levels.

The truth is Phil, anyone in this toxic world of ours can benefit from a cleanse. Although many herbal detox formulas are easily available at your local Health Food Store and some Pharmacies, I highly recommend you consult a qualified nutrition professional who can help you select a detox protocol or guide you through the ins and outs of a cleansing diet.

Without professional supervision, cleansing diets or detox regimes should never be undertaken during pregnancy, or by anyone who suffers from Ulcerative Colitis or Crohn's Disease. Also, avoid detox regimes if you are taking prescription drugs containing **Digitalis** or **Nitrofurantoin**. Though this probably doesn't apply to you, anyone using the Birth Control Pill for contraception should be warned to use extra protection while following a detox diet.

Yours in Health and Happiness,
Mercedes

Send in your Nutrition and Wellness questions to: andnowtoyou@gmail.com

Lorraine Mercedes Picot is a Registered Nutritional Consultant, Registered Orthomolecular Health Practitioner and Naturotherapist. Mercedes has been offering one-on-one nutritional counseling for over 20 years in Ottawa, in Victoria and she now resides in Montreal. She is passionate about her work and is committed to helping her clients reach their goals.

She offers consultations in either English or French and is a member of the IONC (International Organization of Nutritional Consultants) and the ANN (Academy of Naturopaths and Naturotherapists). She can be reached at 514- 439- 4685 or at this email address.

The advice provided in her column is for informational purposes only. Please consult with a qualified Physician for any serious health problems.