

# Detoxification

In my introduction to Functional Medicine you learned why the digestive system is so important to creating Optimal Wellness. The next step is learning how to optimize your detoxification system.

The role of toxins and detoxification in health has been largely ignored by medicine. But thankfully scientists and practitioners are starting to recognize its importance in health. But how do you know if you are toxic? Many of you probably have symptoms of chronic toxicity that you don't label as being toxic. If any items in this list sound familiar, keep in mind that detoxifying might be critical for you to get healthy and feel good again.

- Fatigue
- Muscle aches
- Joint pain
- Sinus congestion
- Postnasal drip
- Excessive sinus problems
- Headaches
- Bloating
- Gas
- Constipation
- Diarrhea
- Foul-smelling stools
- Heartburn
- Sleep problems
- Difficulty concentrating
- Food cravings
- Water retention
- Trouble losing weight
- Rashes
- Skin problems

- Eczema
- Psoriasis
- Canker sores
- Acne
- Puffy, dark circles under your eyes
- Premenstrual syndrome
- Other menstrual disorders
- Bad breath

When you hear the word “detox” you might think drug detox or alcohol detox or wheatgrass enemas. That’s not what I am talking about. I am referring to the science of how our bodies get rid of waste. If waste builds up, we get sick. The key is to figure out how to enhance our body’s capacity to detoxify and get rid of waste while minimizing our exposure to toxins. And why is this important? It’s because many diseases of our society are actually related to toxicity. Here are some of the diseases that are linked to toxicity:

- Parkinson’s
- Alzheimer’s
- Dementia
- Heart disease
- Chronic fatigue syndrome
- Fibromyalgia syndrome
- Cancers
- Autoimmune diseases
- Food Allergies
- Arthritis
- Digestive diseases, like Crohn’s disease, ulcers, colitis, inflammatory bowel
- Menstrual problems like heavy bleeding, cramps, PMS, menopausal symptoms, mood changes and hot flashes

It might seem that everyone is toxic. That may be true to differing degrees.

Problems with detoxification is one root of illness. The gut is one of the core systems in the body that must be working well for you to be healthy. If you feel lousy, it's likely you're toxic.

If you answer yes to any of these questions you may be toxic.

- I have hard, difficult to pass bowel movements every day or every other day
- I am constipated and only go every other day or less often
- I urinate small amounts of dark, strong smelling urine only a few times a day
- I almost never break a real sweat
- I have one or more of the following symptoms: fatigue, muscle aches, headaches, concentration and memory problems
- I have Fibromyalgia or Chronic fatigue syndrome
- I drink unfiltered tap or well water
- I dry clean my clothes
- I work or live in a "tight" building with poor ventilation or windows that don't open
- I live in a large urban or industrial area
- I use household or lawn garden chemicals or get my house or apartment treated for bugs by an exterminator
- I have more than 1-2 mercury amalgams
- I eat large fish (swordfish, tuna, shark, tilefish) more than once a week
- I am bothered by one or more of the following: Gasoline or diesel fumes, perfumes, new car smells, fabric stores, dry cleaning, hair spray or other strong odors, soaps, detergents, tobacco smoke, chlorinated water
- I have a negative reaction when I consume foods containing MSG, sulfites (wine, salad bars, dried fruit), sodium benzoate (preservative), red wine, cheese, bananas or chocolate, even a small amount of alcohol, eating food with garlic and onions
- When I drink coffee or caffeine containing substances I feel wired up, an increase in joint and muscle aching or have hypoglycemic symptoms

(anxiety, palpitations, sweating, dizziness)

- I regularly consume any of the following substances or medications: acetaminophen (Tylenol), acid blocking drugs (Tagamet, Zantac, Pepcid, Prilosec, Prevacid), hormone modulating medications in pills, patches or creams (the pill, estrogen, progesterone, prostate medication), ibuprofen or naproxen, medications for Colitis or Crohn's disease, recurrent headaches, allergy symptoms, nausea, diarrhea or indigestion
- I have had jaundice (turning yellow) for any reason or I have been told I have Gilbert's syndrome (an elevation of a liver test called bilirubin)
- I have a history of any of the following conditions: Breast cancer, smoking induced lung cancer, other type of cancer, prostate problems, food allergies, sensitivities or intolerances
- I have a family history of Parkinson's, Alzheimer's, ALS (amyotrophic lateral sclerosis) or other motor neuron diseases, or multiple sclerosis

It is important to understand why we are toxic and how we can detoxify. I will explain how you can detoxify a little later, but first I want to tell you about where toxins come from and how we are overloaded.

### **How much toxicity is too much?**

To understand toxicity you must understand the concept of total load. This is the total amount of stressors on your system at any one time and what happens is like a glass filling over with water. It takes a certain amount to fill the glass and then, after a certain point, you put more in and it overflows.

When our detoxification system is overwhelmed, is overloaded, that's when we start getting symptoms and get sick, but it may take years of accumulated stress and toxins to get to that point.

- The total load includes the load of things like heavy metals, mercury and lead, petrochemicals, residues, pesticides and fertilizers.
- It includes food allergies, environmental allergies, molds and toxins from molds.

- It includes a SAD (standard American diet).
- It includes stress — the mental, emotional and spiritual toxins that affect us, the isolation, the loneliness, the anger, the jealousy, hostility, which all translate into toxins in our system.
- Medications can sometimes be toxins. Often we need medications, but the reality is that most of us are over-medicated and use medications for things for which there are better solutions such as lifestyle and diet.
- Lastly, there are internal toxins, things like bacteria, fungus, yeast, that are inside our gut that may be affecting us, as well as hormonal and metabolic toxins that we need to eliminate.

Now why aren't we all sick given this incredible load of toxins? It is because each of us is genetically and biochemically unique. Some of us are good at getting rid of toxins and waste, and others are not. As an example: one might become overloaded with mercury and couldn't get rid of it because of a missing a gene for GSTM1 – a critical detoxifying enzyme for mercury. But by learning to support the system and learning how to detoxify you are able to cure yourself from an incurable condition.

### **How to Detox**

There are five key steps to optimal detoxification. Here they are:

1. Identify and Get Rid of Toxins
2. Fix Your Gut – a source of toxic load for many
3. Get Moving – to help your blood and lymphatic circulation do its job
4. Get Your Liver and Detox System Working
5. Detox your mind, heart and spirit

But let me make it more practical for you. I can summarize them into ten basic principles that you can start now.

1. Drink plenty of clean water, at least eight to ten glasses of filtered water a day.
2. Keep your bowels moving, at least once or twice a day. And if you can't

- get going, then you need some help and this can include taking two tablespoons of ground flax seeds, taking acidophilus and extra magnesium capsules in the form of magnesium citrate. If you have any chronic diseases or problems you have to be careful about taking supplements, you should work with your doctor.
3. You should also eat organic produce and animal products to eliminate the toxins in our food.
  4. You should eat eight to ten servings of colorful fruits and vegetables and specifically include, every day, the family of the cruciferous vegetables, broccoli, collards, kale, cabbage, brussel sprouts, kohlrabi, as well as the garlic family, garlic and onions, which help increase sulfur in the body and help detoxification.
  5. Avoid stimulants, sedatives and drugs, such as caffeine, nicotine, and try to reduce alcohol intake.
  6. Exercise five days a week with focus on conditioning of your cardiovascular system, strengthening exercises and stretching exercises.
  7. Get rid of the white menace, which is white flour and white sugar.
  8. Sweat profusely at least three times a week, using a sauna, steam or a detox bath.
  9. Take a high quality multivitamin and mineral.
  10. Relax deeply every day, to get your nervous system in a state of calm, rest and relaxation.

The comprehensive program outlined here will help to correct problems caused by toxicity, maximize your body's own detoxification capacity, and help you safely eliminate stored toxins.

Depending on your symptoms, genetic predispositions and environmental exposures, you each may need different levels of nutrients and types of treatment. But remember, getting rid of toxins and learning how to optimize your detoxification system is essential for creating Optimal Wellness