

NATURE'S DETOXIFIERS

BOTANICALS FOR A WHOLE-FOODS CLEANSE

Your body is constantly clearing out toxins, ranging from mundane ones like carbon dioxide to more novel ones such as food additives and modern medications. Unfortunately, your body can't always keep up with the toxin load of the modern world. "Your body naturally detoxifies itself through your lungs, liver, kidneys, and skin," explains nutritionist Rania Batayneh, MPH. If you still feel the need to get a fresh start, she cautions against fad liquid cleanses, which can ultimately result in muscle loss. Instead, she recommends a whole-foods approach to cleansing.

Nourishing Habits

"A whole-foods cleanse is based on eating natural foods, eliminating artificial sweeteners and alcohol, and nourishing your body with fresh meals filled with flavor. Herbs and spices (like turmeric) add a lot of flavor with no sodium," she notes. The main component of turmeric, called curcumin, aids digestion and helps with liver detoxification and cleansing.

Laurie Steelsmith, ND, LAc, author of *Natural Choices for Women's Health*, is another fan of turmeric. She recommends "adding it to your food or throwing some into your smoothies or juice. You can also buy curcumin to take as a supplement—500 milligrams (mg) three times a day."

"You can do a full-on 21-day cleanse if you want, which is something that I recommend my patients do once a year," says Dr. Steelsmith, or you can simply support your body's innate detoxification mechanisms on a daily basis. For example, choose organic foods since they have fewer toxins than conventionally grown foods, and drink plenty of water.

Supplemental Help

Another gentle way to support your body's detoxification efforts is to consume "green foods," such as spirulina or wheat grass. Green foods, aside from being rich in antioxidants, take some of the load off the liver, which is the body's hardest-working detox organ. If you want to give green foods a try, you can juice whole green foods or mix 1 to 3 teaspoons of green foods powder or flakes with water or juice. Some people find the flavor to be strong; you can mask it with flavorful juices such as blueberry or pomegranate.

The herb milk thistle is also well-regarded for bolstering liver function. In fact, this herb has a 2,000-year history of use as a liver supporter. A compound in milk thistle called silymarin is widely considered the active constituent. Research has shown silymarin to improve liver function.

Milk thistle can be particularly helpful after using certain medications, since most medications are processed through the liver. Antibiotics and the pain reliever acetaminophen (Tylenol) can create toxic byproducts in the liver. Taking milk thistle after a course of antibiotics or while using acetaminophen can help clear those toxins from the liver. Silymarin has even been shown to regenerate injured liver cells. Select a milk thistle supplement that provides 420 mg of silymarin per day. TFL

SLIMMING STRATEGIES

West Coast-based nutritionist and America's Eating Strategist Rania Batayneh, MPH, works with clients to design personalized programs to achieve nutrition goals. Here are six of her go-to tips that can benefit anyone seeking to detoxify and achieve a higher level of wellness.

1. Stay hydrated (6 to 8 glasses of water per day).
2. Snack on more fruits and vegetables.
3. Sweat daily.
4. Cook more at home.
5. Skip the second cup of coffee and opt for tea instead.
6. Sleep for success (7 to 8 hours per night).

SELECTED SOURCES "Acetaminophen-induced Hepato- and Nephrotoxicity and Amelioration by Silymarin . . ." by K. S. Gopi et al., *Toxicol Int*, 7/10 □ Personal communication: Rania Batayneh, MPH; Laurie Steelsmith, ND, 3/12 □ "Silymarin and Hepatoprotection" by F. J. Burczynski et al., *Zhong Nan Da Xue Xue Bao Yi Xue Ban*, 1/12