

Full Body Cleanse: The Basics

(Posted by Dr. Ben Kim on Jan 7, 2012, www.drbenkim.com)

What Exactly is Detoxification?

Detoxification refers to the process of eliminating toxins from your body. There are two major types of toxins that your body accumulates over time:

Environmental Toxins: Sometimes called exogenous (made outside your body) toxins, environmental toxins include all the chemicals and pollutants that you're exposed to through air, water, and food. Common environmental toxins include pesticides, herbicides, prescription and over-the-counter medications, carbon monoxide, triclosan, biphenyl A, phthalates, and volatile organic compounds.

Metabolic Toxins: Sometimes called endogenous (made inside your body) toxins, metabolic toxins are produced by each of your cells as they go about their everyday metabolic processes. Metabolic toxins can also be produced by microorganisms that act on incompletely digested food in your digestive tract.

It's normal for your cells to contain some toxins at all times. After all, your cells need to manufacture energy on an ongoing basis, and the manufacturing process results in waste (toxin) production. Toxins only present a challenge to your health when they accumulate to a point where they interfere with cellular function - we call this state toxicosis.

The first effect of toxicosis is disruption of cellular function. If a group of cells experience significant toxicosis, specific health challenges develop, examples being thyroiditis, hepatitis, prostatitis, unexplained chronic fatigue, and problems with vision. If toxicosis persists, it's possible for the DNA in your cells to become damaged, which may lead to abnormal cellular growth of the affected cells.

While the majority of chronic health challenges are caused by more than one factor, I hope that it's clear that allowing your body to accumulate toxins over the long haul can result in you developing any one of the chronic diseases that are plaguing people in industrialized countries. To be clear, toxicosis can contribute to coronary artery disease, high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes mellitus, respiratory illness, kidney disease, liver dysfunction, autoimmune illness, hormonal imbalances, skin conditions, and most types of cancer.

Your Body is Constantly Detoxifying and Cleansing

The good news is that your body is designed to constantly gather up and remove toxins from your cells. Most of the toxins that are stirred up from your cells are broken down in your liver, and then eliminated from your body via your kidneys, colon, skin, lungs, and mucus linings in your nose and ears. Put another way, every time that you urinate, defecate, exhale, cough, sneeze, and experience an inside-out reaction with your skin, your body eliminates toxins from your system.

If your exposure to toxins rises, your body increases its output through the eliminative channels mentioned above. If your eliminative mechanisms cannot keep up with the number of toxins that are coming in and being generated in your cells, in an effort to preserve your health, your body attempts to store some of the toxins in your fat tissues. Even if you are lean for your body type, your body can store toxins in fat tissues that can be found interspersed between your muscle fibers and surrounding your organs. The bottom line is this: your body is committed to eliminating harmful toxins from your system at all times. Toxins can become problematic to your health if you accumulate enough of them to experience cellular dysfunction.

Full Body Cleanse

I hope that it's clear that your body is experiencing a full body cleanse at all times. Put another way, your body is constantly at work to keep every cell in your body as healthy as possible. Any effective full body cleanse or any other type of cleansing program that you go through should be designed to accelerate the detoxifying process that your body is already engaged in. There's not a lot that you have to do to encourage your body to rid itself of toxins.

You can accelerate cleansing and detox by reducing the number of exogenous and endogenous toxins that you are exposed to, and by giving your body the rest that it needs to devote its resources to its cleansing and detoxifying mechanisms. Put another way, to experience a truly effective period of intense cleansing, you don't need to give your body much by way of nutrients. Actually, all you need to give your body are physical and emotional rest, fresh air, water, and enough fuel to sustain your most basic metabolic processes. And as people who understand water fasting know, the fuel that you need for intense cleansing can actually come from reserves found in your liver, muscles, and fat. But this isn't an article about water fasting. This is an article about how to experience accelerated full body cleansing while going about most of your everyday routine.

Before we get into a specific protocol for intense cleansing, let's address one final point: your body cleanses and detoxifies itself evenly. What I mean by this is that there's no way for your body to cleanse your kidneys first, and then your liver, and then your eyes, and so on and so forth. Your body detoxifies all of its cells at about the same pace. This doesn't mean that every part of your body will feel healthier at the same pace, as each of your body parts has its own history and genetic predisposition. Let's say, for example, that you have a long history of acne. If you begin a period of intense cleansing, it may be days or weeks or months after your internal organs have become significantly cleaner and healthier when you observe improvement in the health of your skin. And if other factors are contributing to your acne (such as an imbalance in your endocrine system), you may need years of healthful living to experience lasting improvement in skin health and tone. Please don't forget this fact: many chronic health challenges take years to develop, so it's unrealistic to expect such challenges to fully heal within months, even if you fully support your cleansing mechanisms.

Although it may be disheartening to know, the truth is that lasting improvement in your health may take many months or years to manifest itself. You may feel better within days, but I hope that what you're really shooting for is to build a foundation of health that will serve you for decades. Also, please remember that the positive effects of an intense period of cleansing will last only as long as your dietary and lifestyle choices support your health after your cleanse.

Your body is working its tail off to detoxify itself as you are reading these words, and it will continue to do so during an intense cleanse, and after an intense cleanse. Full body cleansing never stops - it is always happening at the pace that your daily choices allow. If you want to experience your best health, your job is to support your body's self-cleansing mechanisms every day.

How to Experience an Intense, Full Body Cleanse

As mentioned earlier, here are the most basic requirements for an intense, fully body cleanse:

1. Expose yourself to as much fresh air as possible.
2. Get as much physical and emotional rest as possible.
3. Stay hydrated with water-rich foods and liquids.

4. Minimize your exposure to exogenous and endogenous toxins

Full Body Cleanse: Diet

During an intense, full body cleanse, the goal with your diet is simple: it's to minimize the workload on your digestive organs while supplying your body with enough energy to carry out its everyday activities. Cleansing is performed primarily by your body's self-regulated cleansing mechanisms, not by the nutrients in the foods that you eat.

Vegetables, fruits, and their juices are excellent food choices for an intense, full body cleanse for the following reasons:

1. For most people, vegetables and fruits are extremely easy to digest.
2. Vegetables and fruits are naturally rich in water; staying hydrated is an essential requirement for an intense, full body cleanse.

For the vast majority of people, grains, legumes, nuts, seeds, and all cooked animal foods are harder to digest than vegetables and fruits. So for an intense period of cleansing, it's best to avoid everything but vegetables, fruits, their juices, and water.

How to Prepare for an Intense, Full Body Cleanse

Before beginning, it's ideal to take a week or at least a few days to taper your intake of the following:

- Coffee
- Alcohol
- Salt
- Sugar and other sweeteners
- All animal foods, including dairy, eggs, fish, shellfish, chicken, beef, pork, and all other flesh meats

These foods put significant strain on your digestive organs, and avoiding them "cold turkey" can sometimes create withdrawal symptoms that are too powerful for some people to tolerate.

It's fine to eat grains, legumes, nuts, and seeds right up until the day before you begin your intense period of detox - these foods are rich in fiber, and their remains should move through your digestive tract without too much difficulty during your intense cleanse.

If you don't wish to spend up to a week to taper your intake of the foods listed above, it's fine to begin right away; just be aware that you may experience highly uncomfortable symptoms of withdrawal, like strong headaches, lightheadedness, and nausea.

Other than tapering the foods-to-avoid during your cleanse, all that remains during the preparatory phase is to make sure that your kitchen is well stocked with vegetables and fruits that you enjoy.

Here is a list of vegetables and fruits that can be used for a highly effective cleanse:

- Dark green, leafy lettuce (romaine, red leaf, green leaf)
- Avocados
- Tomatoes
- Cucumbers
- Celery
- Carrots

- Red beets (one or two will last a week)
- Zucchini
- Bell peppers
- Broccoli
- Cauliflower
- Cabbage
- Asparagus
- Onions
- Corn
- Yukon gold or new potatoes
- Sweet potatoes or yams
- Acorn or butternut squash
- Watermelon
- Honeydew
- Cantaloupe
- Pears
- Apples
- Bananas
- Mangoes
- Papaya
- Peaches
- Plums
- Nectarines
- Grapes
- Coconut
- Oranges and grapefruit
- Blueberries, raspberries, blackberries, goji berries, and any other berries that you enjoy
- Any other fruits or vegetables that you enjoy raw or juiced

Clearly, it's best to choose fruits and vegetables that are in season. Organic varieties are best, but my experience has been that non-organic produce can also be used to experience an intense period of detox.

Regarding liquids: Have on hand plenty of water that you feel comfortable drinking. When weighed against all of the moment-to-moment dietary and lifestyle factors that affect your health, so long as your water isn't intentionally poisoned, even municipal tap water can be used to experience a highly effective cleanse. It's fine to drink warm or hot water. It's also fine to use sparkling mineral water as you desire, although you should mainly drink "still" water during your cleanse.

Regarding medications: Please do not taper or stop taking prescription medications without your physician's consent.

Regarding nutritional supplements: Avoid any supplements that contain synthetic nutrients, protein isolates, grains, nuts, seeds, or lecithin. It's fine to take whole food supplements that contain nothing but vegetables and/or fruits. It's also fine to take a probiotic as long as it doesn't have added protein, grains, nuts, seeds, or lecithin.

Regarding equipment: If you can chew your foods well, you don't need much by way of equipment. If you have access to a strong blender and a juicer, you can make smoothies and juices during your intense cleanse, but these aren't absolutely necessary.

How important is it to stay away from coffee during the full body cleanse program?

Beyond stirring up and eliminating toxins, one of the goals of the full body cleanse is to restore optimal tone to your autonomic nervous system and all of the organs that your autonomic system governs.

One of the keys to restoring optimal tone to your autonomic nervous system is to avoid stimulants. The most common stimulants used in everyday life are alcohol, nicotine, and drinks that contain concentrated doses of caffeine, like coffee, most conventional teas, some types of soda, and energy drinks.

So the answer to this question is that it's quite important to try to avoid the use of coffee while on the full body cleanse program. While you can still experience significant health benefits if you drink coffee during your cleanse, you won't experience optimal improvement in the health of your autonomic nervous system.

The Full Body Cleanse Diet

Morning

Eat any raw, ripe fruits that you desire, along with any combination of lettuce, celery, and avocado, if desired. If you have trouble staying full on just raw fruits and vegetables, be sure to have avocado with your fruit, as the healthy fatty acids found in avocado should help you stay satisfied until your next meal. If you'd like, you can blend up your morning meal into a smoothie. You can also have water, sparkling water, or a hot drink made with boiling water and peppermint or chamomile tea.

Afternoon

Eat a large vegetable salad with as many different vegetables as possible. If you would like a salad dressing, use extra-virgin olive oil, fresh lemon juice, fresh orange juice, fresh lime juice or any combination of extra-virgin olive oil and citrus juice. Try to avoid vinegar, honey, salt, and spices. If you have trouble feeling full, again, try to include an avocado with your salad. If you don't think you can make it to dinner on a raw vegetable salad with avocado, have a steamed Yukon gold potato, new potato, or sweet potato after your salad. Feel free to have water, sparkling water, or peppermint or chamomile tea after your lunch meal. Also feel free to have any fresh, ripe fruits that you desire after your vegetable salad.

Evening

Eat any combination of raw vegetables and fruits that you desire, but aim to have at least as many vegetables as fruits. If you're still hungry after eating raw vegetables and fruits, have any steamed vegetables that you enjoy, such as steamed broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, corn, and asparagus. If you're still hungry after eating steamed vegetables, feel free to have steamed root vegetables, such as steamed potatoes, sweet potatoes and carrots. Have as much water, sparkling water, or peppermint or chamomile tea that you desire.

Snacks

Any raw fruits, vegetables, their juices, and smoothies made with raw fruits and vegetables are fine snack choices. For a dip to eat with raw vegetables, have guacamole made with avocado, red onion, and lemon or lime juice.

Full Body Cleanse Sample Menu

Morning

Big bowl of watermelon with a large handful of romaine lettuce leaves and 1/4 to 1/2 of an avocado.

Afternoon

A large vegetable salad made with leafy lettuce, cucumber slices, tomato slices, shredded carrots, shredded red beets, sliced red onions, shredded zucchini, 1/2 to 1 whole avocado, 1/2 a sweet bell pepper, and raw corn kernels.

Optional: Dressing made by mixing one part extra-virgin olive oil and one part orange juice.

Evening

Small bowl of romaine lettuce, celery sticks, mango, and blueberries. Steamed cabbage, broccoli, and 1/2 to 1 whole raw avocado.

Snack

Smoothie made with banana, blueberries, mango, and water.

Full Body Cleanse Schedule

A nice feature of this full body cleanse is that you can follow it for however many days you desire and/or your schedule allows. Initially, you may want to try it over the weekend, beginning on Friday evening, and ending on Monday afternoon.

Many people find that seven full days is quite manageable, and produces noticeable changes in energy level and sense of well-being. The first while can be tough for some people who experience severe symptoms of withdrawal, but for the majority of people who experience such symptoms, things start to look up after a few days. If you like how this program of eating makes you feel, it's fine to continue with it for as long as you feel strong and healthy.

When you're ready to add other foods back into your diet, it's best to proceed slowly. On the first day of "breaking" your cleanse, you should follow the same diet, but add one additional food to your afternoon or evening meal, like hummus made with chickpeas.

On day 2, you can have two servings of protein-dense foods, say a serving of eggs with lunch and a serving of fish for dinner. As you break into a long-term pattern of eating, the goal should be to keep the full body cleanse diet as the foundation of your diet, and to add small servings of healthy, protein-dense foods (grains, legumes, nuts, seeds, and animal foods) to your meals as your appetite dictates.

How to Use Fresh Juices During Your Full Body Cleanse

After a day or two of getting right into the full body cleanse diet, it's fine to try a day or two of having nothing but fresh juices.

Because juices are mostly devoid of fiber, they put even less burden on your digestive organs than the whole foods that they come from. Less digestive burden translates to more energy being available for your self-regulated cleansing mechanisms.

Here are some guidelines for juicing days:

1. Have as many freshly pressed juices as you desire.
2. Stick mainly with green juices that are made with a foundation of dark green, leafy lettuce and celery. Use only small amounts of sweet root vegetables like carrots and red beets.

3. If you want to have some freshly pressed fruit juice, mix it 50/50 with a non-sweet vegetable juice.

Here's an example of what a juicing day might look like:

Juice #1

6 leaves romaine lettuce

2 ribs celery

2 carrots

Juice #2

6 leaves green leafy lettuce

2 oranges

Juice #3

6 leaves romaine lettuce juice

2 leaves green cabbage

2 carrots

Juice #4

Big handful of kale or Swiss chard

2 ribs celery

2 apples

Juice #5

2 tomatoes

2 carrots

3 ribs celery

Squeeze of lemon juice

After your juicing day(s), go back to the full body cleanse diet described above for at least a day before adding protein-dense foods to your diet. An alternative to doing full juicing days is to substitute one of your regular meals with a freshly pressed vegetable juice.

Full Body Cleanse: Lifestyle

During and after an intense, full body cleanse, you can expect to feel refreshed, like your body has become younger and lighter. To experience the greatest possible benefits during your intense cleanse, it's important that you minimize your exposure to endogenous and exogenous toxins.

Minimizing your exposure to endogenous toxins is relatively simple - you just need to follow the full body cleanse diet, chew your foods well, and do your best not to overeat. This combination of actions will minimize production of toxins in your digestive tract and within your cells.

What follows is a list of suggestions on how to minimize your exposure to exogenous toxins:

1. Minimize use of cosmetics - it's best to use none at all during an intense cleansing period. It's most important to avoid use of cosmetics around your mouth to prevent accidental ingestion of chemicals found in many cosmetic products.
2. Minimize use of moisturizer and chapstick / lip balm. If you must use something on your skin and lips, consider using a small amount of coconut oil.
3. Try not to use deodorants, antiperspirants, or perfumes/colognes.

4. Use the smallest amount of shampoo possible, and if your life circumstances permit, use a brand made with natural ingredients - there are plenty of such brands at most department stores these days.

Here are some additional suggestions on how to conserve energy and allow your body to devote the bulk of its resources to cleansing and detoxification:

1. Minimize use of soap - warm or hot water is sufficient for cleaning.
2. In looking to get as much physical rest as possible, don't neglect resting your eyes. Even while awake, you can enhance physical rest by closing your eyes for a minute or more at a time.
3. As your circumstances permit, take a break from activities that tend to promote emotional distress. For example, taking a week-long break from watching the evening news, or even taking a two-day break from surfing the internet and checking your e-mail may give your nervous system much needed rest.
4. Get plenty of fresh air. Your lungs are constantly expelling carbon dioxide into the air around you, and your cleansing mechanisms are best served by a steady stream of fresh, oxygen-rich air. If you live in a relatively unpolluted environment, sleep with your window cracked open.
5. Get sunlight exposure on your skin without getting burned, but be careful not to get so much sun that you become exhausted - about 15 minutes of direct sunlight exposure each day while at rest is optimal for many people; this doesn't include exposure while going about your daily activities.
6. Engage in light stretching, walking, and even mild sports activities, but don't participate in strenuous exercise during your intense cleanse. The goal is to keep your body moving and your blood circulation strong, but to conserve as much energy as possible for your cleansing mechanisms.

Clearly, the suggestions provided above can be beneficial to your health after you complete an intense period of cleansing. As you experience the intense, full body cleanse described in this series of articles, perhaps you can make it a goal to adopt some or many of these dietary and lifestyle suggestions into your everyday routine for the long term.

If you're serious about using an intense period of detoxification to greatly improve your health, I encourage you to try this program with a close friend or family member. Having a partner to experience this with can make a huge difference in your commitment level, and in the results that you obtain.

Please notice that this program doesn't call for fancy and expensive foods or equipment. It mainly calls for fresh vegetables and fruits, water, and adherence to some basic principles that promote good digestion and physical and emotional rest - it really is that simple.