

New Year Cleansing

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◀ Natural Health

Cleansing is a very popular way to start a New Year. As a physician, I consistently get questions from patients as to the best ways to cleanse, how long, and with what products (if any). It can be very confusing as to which advice to listen to when considering a cleanse; you can actually develop your own program, with a few key guidelines.

The most traditional way of cleansing involves caloric-reduction fasting, which usually includes not eating for several days. This has been thought to be the most ideal way to cleanse, as fasting reduces caloric intake thereby mobilizing energy stores from fat cells and reducing weight. What most people do not know is that fasting in today's world is a bit risky: toxins such as heavy metals and solvents are stored within carbon and sulfur bonds of fat cells. When you fast, your body naturally looks to utilizing the energy from fat cells to maintain metabolic processes. Tapping into fat cells releases the toxins that are stored, and puts them into circulation within your blood stream. These are what are commonly termed "free radicals" and without proper antioxidant levels or support, these toxins will cause damage to healthy cells and contribute to diseases such as atherosclerosis. They will also continue to circulate until you begin eating again, at which time they go back into storage in adipose (fat) cells.

A second method of cleansing involves the use of juices from fruits and vegetables. We recommend this method to patients as opposed to a strict caloric reduction fast because it gives levels of antioxidants and other cofactors necessary for binding to the toxins once they are mobilized in your bloodstream. For this reason, you may not feel the fasting "headache" which is common in a caloric reduction fast (the headache is actually from the circulating toxins) because toxins are being bound to and eliminated from your system. Consuming fresh fruits and veggies via juice is best, making sure you do not rely on bottled juices unless they are unpasteurized. Pasteurized juices have lost their enzymes (from the heat of pasteurization), making what you drink mostly sugar (especially not good if you are diabetic).

You can add some supplements to your cleanse, and there are a number of products on the market that claim to cleanse your body from toxins. When I was in medical school, we tested on ourselves various cleansing products, and found that most do not live up to their claims. We looked at levels of heavy metals prior to taking the products, and levels of heavy metals after. Unfortunately, we did not see a change; what we did see clinically is the importance of maintaining adequate antioxidant levels consistently. We also saw that when a good fiber product is used with liver supportive herbs or supplements that give your body support to bind to toxins when you are exposed to them, does help.

If you want to do a more advanced cleanse, there are naturopathic physicians who specialize in heavy metal and solvent detox, with the ability to test your antioxidant levels and your genetic ability to break down toxins. With this information, they can develop an individualized treatment plan for you. You can also add skin brushing or colonics. Skin brushing involves the use of a specially designed "body brush" which you can use before each shower. Lightly brush along your skin towards your heart; this stimulates the flow of lymphatic tissue, ultimately bringing toxins to your liver for elimination. Colonics prevent toxins from being reabsorbed by your colon. Your colon is very efficient, its job is to reabsorb water from fecal material; it also reabsorbs toxins as it does so. Colonics cause this material to be released, helped by the intake of good fiber sources.

So in this New Year, if you are designing your own cleanse, in the very least remember to include antioxidants with a good fiber (we recommend inulin or fresh ground flax; psyllium absorbs too much water and can cause constipation) and liver supportive supplements or herbs. Get a fresh start to 2010!

For more information or to meet a naturopathic physician, you are welcome to call our office at 928.214.8793. We are a non-profit clinic, and volunteer our time in women's shelters.

*We look forward to having you.
www.naturopathsinternational.org*

Our annual convention fundraiser is June 19, 2010 at Coconino Community College in Flagstaff, Az and will feature workshops by leading naturopathic physicians from around the country and state. Proceeds provide holistic medical care services for women/children in shelters.

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