

DETOXIFYING YOUR DIET: EATING FOR OPTIMAL HEALTH

The word detox, short for detoxification, often conjures up associations with drug or alcohol detox, and while drugs and alcohol are toxins, we can also be exposed to toxins in our food and from the environment. Detoxification is a process that takes place in the liver, kidneys, and the intestinal system. Toxins accumulate in the body and can be the cause of various health problems. Food and nutrition can be a source of toxic exposure, but they are also key players in optimizing the detox function within your body.

The Detox Process

The human body is designed to protect the body from toxins. Our skin is the largest organ of the body and helps to protect the body from pollutants and toxins in the environment. Urination and bowel movements are the main avenues of toxin elimination. The liver serves as the central processing plant for toxins.

Most toxins are fat-soluble, which means they cannot travel through the body in water-based blood or be eliminated in water-based urine. The liver converts fat-soluble toxins into water-soluble substances that can be eliminated from the body. There are three primary steps that toxins undergo:

- **Activation:** Enzymes in the liver activate the toxin, creating a less stable substance, referred to as a reactive oxygen species.
- **Detoxification:** The less stable substance is converted into a water-soluble substance that can be excreted.
- **Elimination:** The water-soluble substance is excreted via the kidneys in urine or via the gastrointestinal system in feces.

Throughout this process, specific nutrients play key roles in maximizing the conversion from harmful to less harmful substances and to assist with elimination. Toxins that are not converted into excretable water-soluble substances recirculate back into the body and are stored in fat tissue.

Boosting Our Detox System

Our lifestyle has the biggest influence on elements that enter our body and how we eliminate them. Here's how you can boost up your body's detox system:

- **Limit Alcohol:** excessive intake can impair the liver's ability to function properly.
- **Get Adequate Sleep:** this rest & recharge period helps the body remove toxins build up during the day. Toxins can build up from sleep deprivation.
- **Hydration:** water helps flush waste products from the body
- **Reduce Sugar & Processed Foods:** not only can these lead to risk of obesity and chronic disease, but these can also impair key organs involved in detoxing.
- **Eat Antioxidants:** antioxidant-rich foods, like those found in fruits and vegetables, help to fight oxidative stress caused by toxins in the body.
- **Prebiotics:** prebiotic fibers, like those found in garlic, onions, asparagus and green bananas, help to promote good gut bacteria and reduce risk of inflammation or infection.
- **Decrease Salt and Increase Potassium Intake:** excess salt causes water retention, making it challenging to flush waste from the body. Increasing potassium-rich foods, like bananas, potatoes, tomatoes, and oranges, can help balance fluids and eliminate excess water and waste.
- **Exercise:** regular movement helps reduce inflammation and promotes sweating.

Summary

Detoxification is a complicated but important process. Don't be fooled by companies trying to sell you detoxifying pills and drinks. Detoxification can be a process you embark upon by minimizing your toxic exposure with the suggestions above.



Organic Defined

While you are on the hunt for hormone-free, antibiotic-free and pesticide-free food, it can be helpful for you to know *how* the USDA defines a 100% Organic food – food that is produced without using synthetic pesticides, petroleum or sewage sludge-based fertilizers, bioengineering or ionizing radiation. Organic meat, poultry, eggs and dairy products must come from animals fed 100% organic feed and given no antibiotics or growth hormones. With that in mind, 100% organic does imply a food is free of antibiotics, hormones and pesticides, but it does not imply that an animal has been grass-fed. Labels may make singular claims such as a milk carton saying “rBGH free.”

It's important to note that nutritional quality and benefits for both organic and conventional foods, such as produce, are similar. Determine what works best for your lifestyle, health goals, and budget.

No matter if you choose organic or conventional, make sure you are washing your produce. Use cold water, or make your own produce wash using the recipes below.

RECIPE – MAKE YOUR OWN PRODUCE WASH

PRODUCE SPRAY

Produce spray is better for fruits and vegetables with harder surfaces, such as apples, potatoes, or carrots. The lemon juice adds freshness and acidity, plus it cuts the smell of the vinegar.

Combine the following in a spray bottle:

- 2 cups cold water
- ¼ cup distilled white vinegar
- 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice

To Use: Spray each produce item on every side and scrub it gently with a vegetable scrub brush. Once clean, rinse it in cool water and let dry.

PRODUCE WASH

Produce wash is optimal for looser and softer items, like berries or leafy greens. The salt helps to pull out any bugs that might be hiding in your fruits or veggies, but won't make your produce taste salty. You can double or triple this recipe as needed to fit the amount of produce you have to clean.

Combine the following in a bowl:

- ½ cup cold water
- ½ cup distilled white vinegar,
- 2 tablespoons salt