

It's Time for a Spring Detox

By Lynn C. Allison

According to traditional Chinese medicine, spring is considered a time of renewal of the mind, body, and emotions. And it's the best time to enhance the functioning of the liver, to rid the body of accumulated toxins, and to boost energy after a long winter.

Branson J. Collins, M.D., director of the Marcus Institute of Integrative Health in Florida, who is board certified in anti-aging and regenerative medicine, tells *Health Radar* that symptoms of toxic exposure range from generalized fatigue to brain fog. Some common toxins we are exposed to include chemicals in processed food, personal care and cleaning products, pesticides, alcohol, heavy metals such as mercury and lead, and BPA and phthalates found in plastics.

"A spring detox is a great way to take control over your body's detoxification process. Time frames for optimal detoxification vary by individual, but generally range between 24 hours to 30 days. I find that a 30-day comprehensive detoxification program tends to be the most effective for enforcing positive healthy habits," Collins says.

How to Structure a Spring Detox

Consume whole, unprocessed foods, plenty of fruits and vegetables and hydrate. Rule number one is to avoid processed foods, sugar, alcohol, and excessive caffeine. "Start each meal with

a large glass of water, green tea, or other tea," advises nutritionist Lyssie Lakatos, co-author of "The Nutrition Twins' Veggie Cure."

"Water is especially needed to flush toxins and waste out of the body, an essential part of detoxification. You excrete toxins through urine, sweat, and breathing," she says

Collins adds that drinking smoothies is an excellent way to stay hydrated while consuming detoxifying fruits and vegetables. "While about 20 percent of the fluids we need come from food, adding herbal teas such as dandelion root and milk thistle, helps support liver detoxification," he says. Adequate daily fluid intake is about 15.5 cups for men and 11.5 cups for women.

Plan your meals carefully. While intermittent fasting will help support detoxification by giving the digestive system a break, you can enjoy a more relaxed detox process by mindful meal planning.

Lakatos says that cruciferous vegetables such as cabbage, cauliflower, broccoli, and Brussels sprouts are the best for a spring detox because they contain sulforaphane, which helps the liver to detoxify. Eating foods that are high in sulfur, such as onions and garlic, helps the body excrete heavy metals such as cadmium. Beets contain pectin, a fiber that helps clear toxins from the liver. Green tea is chock-full of catechins, which are antioxidants that reduce inflammation in the body. Adding herbs such as cilantro to your food also

helps the body get rid of toxins, including phthalates and insecticides.

Build each meal. Start with a small amount of a fiber-filled carbohydrate such as oatmeal, quinoa, or sweet potatoes, says Lakatos. Your body will use these carbohydrates for energy. It is important to shun refined grains such as white bread or rice because these foods will spike blood sugar and trigger inflammation. Next, include a lean protein that isn't fried or fatty, so the body doesn't have to work hard to detoxify the food. The lean protein will extend the energy boost from the carbohydrates and keep it on an even keel. Then fill the rest of your plate with lots of produce, preferably organic.

Exercise. "A great way to accelerate the detoxification process is to break a sweat," says Collins. Make it a goal to exercise for 30 minutes a day at least five times a week. "Sauna regimens are also an excellent and effective way to sweat out toxins and can be incorporated into a wellness program to be done for 20-30 minutes three days weekly," adds Collins.

Don't forget to disconnect. Unplug from electronics and spend more time in nature, Collins advises. "By incorporating these simple and natural tips into your yearly routine you can reset and rejuvenate the body to improve your resiliency for the year ahead," he adds. □