

# An Introduction to AYURVEDIC DETOXIFICATION

BY JEFF PERLMAN

As the cold and wet winter transitions to the lighter, warmer, and drier spring we experience a time of rebirth and growth as nature comes back to life. This season can also inspire us to think about physical detoxification, ridding ourselves of the excess heaviness and sluggishness that might have accumulated since the holidays.

The words detoxification, cleansing, and purification have similar meanings. The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines them as, “The removal or extraction of contaminants or impurities, ridding dependencies or addiction, purifying morally or spiritually, and promoting health.”

In today’s fast-paced world, many unhealthy physical, mental, and emotional toxins, impurities, and energies can build up in and around us. Toxins are any substance that can be poisonous or cause negative health effects. Toxins can include food, drugs, alcohol, metals, chemicals, pollutants, food ingredients, and pesticides, or even emotional trauma.

Toxicity may depend on the dosage, frequency, or potency of a substance. Some of the immediate symptoms of toxicity can include constipation, weight gain, sluggishness, sneezing, swelling, or itchy eyes. Buildup of toxicity can contribute to and even be a cause of chronic illnesses such as diabetes, obesity, cancer, and arthritis. There is no practical way to protect yourself from all the toxins in the environment, but you can counteract many with self-education, awareness, and the practice of being present, along with positive lifestyle choices.

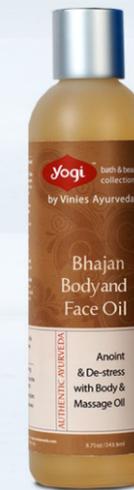
On an ongoing basis, the body naturally detoxifies itself physically through the excretory system (skin, liver, lungs, large intestine, and kidneys). We also detoxify ourselves mentally, emotionally, and spiritually with practices that support the mind and spirit (such as meditation or other techniques).

According to Ayurveda (the Indian holistic medical system), one of the places where toxins are stored is in the fatty tissues of body, so the goal of any effective detoxification is to convince the body and cells to burn stored fat and release impurities naturally.

During the initial stages of purification it is not uncommon to experience some withdrawal symptoms, especially from alcohol, drugs, caffeine or sugar. It is therefore important to prepare yourself for possible side effects as you start reducing and eliminating toxins from your daily life. For most people, these symptoms are minimal, but it is recommended to consult or work with a healthcare provider, doctor, or qualified practitioner to achieve your goals with balance and harmony.

When you start looking around to see the many cleanses available, it can seem both overwhelming and confusing. We may be influenced by the suggestions of our friends and family, what we read in the media, what we hear from celebrity endorsements, or the idea of a quick and easy avenue to achieve our goals. It is important to understand and to take into account our individual natures to recognize how the process of detoxification itself can affect both our short- and long-term health.

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