

# Everything You Need to Know About Detoxing

Complete Guide to Detoxing

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## Your Detoxification System

Let's go back to the basics. In order to understand why we should detox, we need to know what happens if we don't!

Your liver does a lot of things for you, but one of its primary functions is to filter out the toxins in the blood resulting from the foods you eat and the things you are exposed to in your environment. It's a blood purifier, clearing your blood of these impurities so that you only use what you need and don't get too affected by those things that could compromise your health. Your liver is one busy organ, so if it's not working well, your ability to detox will be significantly reduced, and that's bad news for all kinds of reasons.

When your system is heavily burdened with environmental toxins and the liver is functioning sub-optimally, this situation can result in systemic inflammation, which further affects the liver's ability to function well.

It becomes a vicious cycle: toxins keep coming in, the body becomes more inflamed, detoxification is compromised, inflammation increases, and on and on. The only way to break the cycle is to reduce your toxin exposure and support your liver's natural ability to detox, allowing the liver to function as it should and efficiently deal with the detoxification workload.

## The Wide World of Toxins

Unfortunately, in our modern world, we can't escape toxins altogether. But what exactly is considered a toxin and why are they a big deal to my health? One example is xenobiotics—chemical compounds (such as drugs, pesticides, or carcinogens) that are foreign to our bodies and could trigger an immune system overreaction. In fact, these have been linked to various health problems, including autoimmune conditions, mental health problems, weight gain, and more.

These chemicals are just the tip of the iceberg of the number of toxins that are in our beauty products, the air we breathe, the food we eat, and even the water we drink. Here are some examples:



**Perchlorates:** Byproducts of jet fuel and used to manufacture fireworks, these are commonly found in drinking water and linked to thyroid dysfunction

**Pesticides/Herbicides:** used as weed and insect killers for all types of crops and linked to thyroid dysfunction.



**Plastics:** Used in everything from food storage to product packaging

**Flame retardants:** Used in the production of TVs, mattresses, and other furniture and linked to developmental problems



**PFOA:** Used in the production of non-stick pans and cookware

**Halogens:** One type of halogen, fluoride is found in water and dental products



## Signs You Need To Detox

As we've seen, toxins are everywhere. Therefore, when it comes to detoxing, the question is not if you should do a detox, it's when. Symptoms are your body's warning signals that something is off. Start listening to your body and take note if you are experiencing any of these symptoms—it may be time for you to hone in on your detoxing efforts!



- 1. Digestive distress** - Repeated or unusual bloating, gas, and diarrhea are not only uncomfortable, they are a major red flag that things are not functioning properly. A detox will give your gut a break and hit the reset button on your digestive health.

2. **Skin problems** - Our skin eliminates waste and toxins when you sweat, causing toxin overload to appear on your skin in the form of blemishes, rashes, and more.
3. **Bad breath + B.O.** - Do you know the expression "You are what you eat"? Well, in this case, you reek what you eat. Specific body odors, such as an unusual fishy smell due to trimethylamine, can be a sign that toxins have reached an overwhelming level.
4. **Frequent fatigue** - Being in a constant state of exhaustion is not normal. It's adrenal fatigue. Toxin buildup and inflammation can throw your brain-adrenal communication out-of-whack which elevates your cortisol and leaves you always waiting for your next nap.
5. **Sore joints + muscles**  
Ongoing overexertion does a number on your joints and muscles. If you are constantly sore and achy you most likely have systemic inflammation that needs to be addressed.



#### A few other signs that you need to detox include:

- Brain fog
- Poor sleep
- Tension and nervousness
- Trouble losing weight
- Allergies and intolerances
- Constant sugar cravings

### Supplements and Foods to Support Detox\*

There is no "quick fix" when it comes to detoxing. However, there are certain supplements that can help facilitate the removal of toxins from your body while also supporting your body's own detoxification pathways.\*

1. **Charcoal** - Activated charcoal is commonly used to attract toxic chemicals from our body, making it one of the best detox support supplements you can take.\* When taken orally, these toxins will bind with the activated charcoal and then move with it through your body to be removed as waste in your bowel movements.\* Activated charcoal can also help to alleviate uncomfortable gas and bloating caused by gas-producing foods.\*
2. **Milk Thistle** - This plant aids in eliminating toxins from your liver while also helping support healthy liver cell function.\*



3. **Chlorella** - A type of blue-green algae found in fresh and saltwater around the world that is abundant in chlorophyll, giving it the ability to support the body's normal detoxification of a variety of toxins.\*
4. **N-acetyl-cysteine** - Also known as NAC for short, this free radical scavenger has long been studied for its ability to protect the liver from the oxidative stress typically produced during the detoxification process.\*

### Detoxing Superfoods

Most clean, whole foods are going to be beneficial on your detox journey as they will help keep your toxin level low and are packed with nutrients to support proper functioning of all areas of your body. But there are some foods that stand apart more than others for their ability to help your body rid itself of toxins and improve the function of a sluggish detoxification system.



1. **Blueberries** - Not only are blueberries low in fructose and contain some of the highest amounts of antioxidants of any food, research has found that blueberries can support pathways in the body that aid in detoxification.
2. **Cilantro** - Cilantro has been shown to help detox your body, especially when taken in conjunction with chlorella. Bring on the tacos and guac!
3. **Beets** - By increasing enzyme activity, beets are able to help your body break down toxins. These are delicious when roasted as a side dish or added to a salad!
4. **Dark leafy greens** - Methylation is your body's biochemical superhighway that controls your detox pathways. In order to function optimally, it requires folate, which is found in greens like kale, collards, chard, and spinach.
5. **Sulfur-rich vegetables** - Cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower, onions, garlic, mushrooms, and asparagus also support methylation because they support the production of the powerful antioxidant glutathione. This antioxidant is essential for activating phase 1 and phase 2 liver detoxification.

\*These statements have not been evaluated by the Food and Drug Administration. These products are not intended to diagnose, treat, cure or prevent any disease.

## My Top Wellness Practices to Enhance Detoxification

Make your life a cleanse by implementing these daily practices to support your detox pathways and limit your toxin exposure.



- 1. Sweat** - Did you know that your skin is actually your largest organ and is part of your detoxification system? Sweat works as a way for your body to expel any toxins within your body. My favorite ways to sweat are with daily movement like cardio and sitting in an infrared sauna.
- 2. Swap out your cleaning and personal care products** - Conventional dish soaps, laundry detergents, fabric softeners, household cleaners, makeup, and perfumes contain harmful chemicals. Ditch those and look instead for products labeled nontoxic, especially those with plant-based ingredients.
- 3. Breathe clean air** - Toxins and pollutants can also be found in the air you breathe. A high-quality air filter for your home can ensure the air you are breathing every day is free from dust, pollen, and other toxins.
- 4. Drink clean water** - You would be shocked at the amount of chemicals floating around in your drinking water. An at-home water filter will help to remove the majority of common toxins that are found in most municipal water supplies.

## The Takeaway

No one can live a completely toxin-free life. But we can do a lot to reduce our exposure and support our body's natural detoxification pathways to combat what we do come across on a daily basis. From supplements to superfoods, there are so many ways you can naturally win the war against toxins and be on your way to a healthier you.\*

## About Dr. Will Cole

Based in Pittsburgh, Dr. Will Cole, IFMCP, DNM, DC, counsels clients all over the world. His holistic approach to wellness through functional medicine finds the root cause of health problems and tailors a functional approach to the individual. He is the best-selling author of "Ketotarian," "The Inflammation Spectrum," and "Intuitive Fasting." His latest book, "Gut Feelings" (March 21, 2023) offers a definitive guide to understanding the connection between what you eat and how you feel.



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