



Spring Clean YOUR DIET

Tips and recipes to help eliminate
toxins and satisfy your taste buds

Experience Life





Hello — and welcome!

If you're looking to spruce up your diet, research shows that a whole-foods diet free of processed fare may be your best bet. Juice cleanses and "skinny tea" laxatives may promise rapid weight loss and vibrant energy — but they can leave you feeling anything but energized.

The truth is that cleaning up your diet and detoxifying your body does not have to mean following unsustainable crash diets. Our bodies are programmed to eliminate toxins through complex metabolic pathways. So the question, really, is: How do we optimize our body's everyday functions? And the answer is opting for meals that contain an abundance of vegetables and fruits — especially digestion-boosting, anti-inflammatory foods that aid the vital detoxification systems in your liver.

This guide contains various tips and nutrient-rich recipes to support your body's innate detoxification systems. We hope it inspires you to spring clean *your* diet!





Support Your Liver

Spring is a time of cleansing and renewal. According to Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), it's also the season of the liver, a key organ responsible for detoxification.

The liver is a filter, explains functional-medicine practitioner Jill Carnahan, MD: It sifts out dangerous materials before they enter your bloodstream. But because the volume of hazardous substances in the environment is steadily increasing, the liver can become overwhelmed.

Liver-rescue protocols abound, but daily support of this detoxifying organ is a better way to protect your health. The following lifestyle behaviors will help protect your liver and support its function.

1. ATTEND TO YOUR “EXPOSOME”

The food you eat, the air you breathe, and any toxins you encounter, as well as the chemicals and hormones your body generates, make up your exposome. This measure of personal exposures plays a significant role in your long-term health, says functional-medicine doctor Robert Rountree, MD. And there are simple ways to clean it up. Install a quality water filter. Take shoes off indoors so you don't track in pesticides. Routinely check your home for mold to protect air quality. Dust often. Invest in an air purifier. If you have a green thumb, stock up on houseplants, which may help clean the air.

2. STAY HYDRATED

The liver processes fat-soluble toxins in two phases. During phase 1, it transforms them into compounds that are easier for the body to eliminate. During phase 2, they are transformed again, this time into water-soluble substances that the body then excretes. Any activity that keeps water-soluble compounds moving through the body helps the liver remove toxins, and there is no better way to achieve this than by drinking plenty of clean, filtered water daily. Shoot for half your body weight in fluid ounces each day to stay well hydrated.

3. BALANCE YOUR GUT

The healthier our gut is, the lighter the burden it delivers to the liver. A healthy gut sports a solid barrier and a diverse mix of bacteria. But when these are compromised, hostile bacteria can run amok and produce toxins of their own, some of which can mimic alcohol byproducts. “Gut bacteria produce a significant percentage of the chemical metabolites found in the bloodstream,” notes Rountree. “For example, people with intestinal overgrowth of fermenting yeast or bacteria may get liver toxicity simply from their own ‘internal breweries.’”

To create and maintain microbial balance in the gut, eat **probiotic-rich foods**, like yogurt, sauerkraut, and kimchi. Prebiotic foods, such as Jerusalem artichokes, chicory root, apples, and dandelion greens, are also good choices because they feed healthy bacteria. Include plenty of fiber in your diet and go easy on the simple carbs and refined sugar, which can foster the growth of bad bacteria. A high-quality probiotic supplement can also help.





4. BE MINDFUL WITH PHARMACEUTICALS

Once a drug enters the body, it is subject to first-pass metabolism, or the one-two punch of absorption through the gut wall and breakdown by the liver. First-pass metabolism taxes the liver, using resources it might otherwise devote to processing other exposures.

So, though some drugs are necessary, pay attention to how many medications you use. If you take over-the-counter pain relievers regularly, especially those containing acetaminophen, consult a healthcare practitioner who can help you taper off safely and find more liver-friendly ways to ease your symptoms.

5. TAKE A SAUNA

Saunas offer an excellent way to sweat out toxins. Case studies show that regular sauna use may help regulate mercury levels, and research on lead toxicity suggests that sauna bathing can help the body eliminate toxic trace metals.

6. SOAK IN AN EPSOM-SALTS BATH

Although there is little direct research on the effectiveness of Epsom-salts baths for detoxification, the salts' main ingredients, magnesium and sulfate, are both reputed to support detox processes, drawing toxins from the body. Plus, the stress-relieving benefits of a relaxing bath are hard to overstate.

7. EXERCISE

To move toxins out of your body, move your body! Sweat removes potentially harmful molecules through the pores, and studies report that some toxins, like heavy metals, are even more concentrated in sweat than in blood or urine.

8. AVOID EXCESS

TCM practitioners say too much of anything — food, alcohol, toxins — can cause a “stagnant” liver (they all produce a heavy load for the liver to process). So make moderation your mantra.





Make a Spring-Greens Tonic

It's easy to get into a rut buying bags of "spring mix" greens, which mostly include mild, traditional lettuces and spinach. Next time, consider selecting some of the lesser-known spring greens, like watercress, **dandelion greens**, and arugula; they are bursting with peppery flavor, are versatile when cooking, and eating them is like a **spring cleaning for your body**.

Even easier? Use them to make this refreshing, cleansing juice with celery, lemon, and mint. Add a green apple or a pear for sweetness, if you'd like.

INGREDIENTS

- 5 ribs celery
- 1 head romaine lettuce
- 1 bunch watercress or arugula
- ½ cup fresh mint leaves
- 1 lemon
- 1 Granny Smith apple or 1 pear (optional)

DIRECTIONS

1. Run all ingredients through a juicer and enjoy immediately.



Try These Real-Food Detox Superstars

Lemon-juice flushes. Coffee enemas. Fruit-only diets. It's no wonder many people dismiss detoxing as a perennial fad. But don't be too quick to reject the idea of detoxification altogether. Many of your organs are equipped with detoxification superpowers, and with just a little nutritional support from *real food*, their powers get stronger.

Your liver, for example, neutralizes environmental pollutants that could trigger a range of health conditions. Your kidneys filter waste from your blood. Your skin releases toxic elements via sweat. And your digestive system shuttles waste out of your body with each bowel movement.

Here are some of the most detoxifying foods and the ways they support your body's natural detox functions.

HELP YOUR LIVER

One of the liver's most important roles is to filter waste products and remove harmful substances from the blood after they pass through the stomach and intestines and before they move to the rest of the body. Compounds found in the foods at right help to increase the cellular response or sensitivity of enzymes in the liver and remove undesirable elements from your body.

Detox Superstars:

Watercress
Brussels sprouts
Kale
Cabbage
Broccoli and cauliflower
Bok choy
Onions and leeks
Garlic

PREVENT HEAVY-METAL ACCUMULATION

Heavy metals like lead, mercury, and arsenic are ubiquitous in our environment and are known to cause organ damage and increase cancer risk. Fortunately, some common foods and spices can help prevent their accumulation. (See "[Weighing Heavy Metals](#)" to learn more.)

Detox Superstars:

Turmeric
Seaweed
Cilantro
Onions
Garlic

CLEANSE YOUR COLON

Constipation is one sign that your body isn't detoxing the way it should. Getting plenty of fiber and water supports healthy, regular bowel movements — helping to remove waste products and other undesirable compounds from your body. "If you're not moving things through your bowels, then you can't get rid of that total toxic load," says functional-medicine doctor Robert Rountree, MD.

Detox Superstars:

Lentils
Raspberries
Brown rice
Barley
Oatmeal
Artichokes
Apples

SUPPORT SWEAT PRODUCTION

The skin is a large organ that acts as a barrier to foreign substances. It's also a surface through which some toxins can be excreted via your sweat. In a review of 24 studies published in the *Journal of Environmental and Public Health*, researchers concluded that sweating has the potential to assist with removing toxins, such as heavy metals, from the body. These foods can encourage perspiration and nudge your sweat glands to cleanse away.

Detox Superstars:

Habanero peppers, serrano peppers, and jalapeño peppers
Organic green tea and organic black tea
Organic coffee

For more on which foods support your body's ability to detoxify, read "[Everyday Detox](#)."



Make This Whole-Foods Detox Recipe

Many health-conscious people opt for functional drinks and foods when detoxing — think vitamin-enhanced water or energy bars infused with green-tea extract — but these foods are rarely as healthy as whole foods.

“No single nutrient is likely to work as well as a diet rich in the fruits and vegetables from which that nutrient was isolated,” says Marion Nestle, PhD, professor emerita of nutrition and food studies at New York University.

After all, detoxing isn’t just about purging toxins. It’s about nourishing your body with revitalizing whole foods that are abundant in nutrients, fiber, and antioxidants.

Try these nutrient-rich recipes to support your liver *and* satisfy your taste buds.



Arugula Salad With Chive Vinaigrette

The cruciferous veggies in this salad — arugula and cabbage — contain glucosinolates, which feature sulfur that supports liver function. The antioxidants in the blueberries and flaxseed oil can help reduce oxidative stress.

SALAD

- 1 cup dried chickpeas
- ½ tsp. sea salt
- 1 tbs. extra-virgin olive oil
- 8 oz. baby arugula (about 8 cups loosely packed)
- 1 cup shredded purple cabbage
- 1 cup blueberries
- ¼ cup roasted, salted pumpkin seeds

VINAIGRETTE

- 1 tbs. minced fresh chives
- 1 tbs. extra-virgin olive oil
- ½ tbs. flaxseed oil
- 1 tsp. apple-cider vinegar
- 1 tsp. nutritional yeast
- ½ tsp. lemon zest

DIRECTIONS

1. Pour the chickpeas into a bowl and add enough water to cover them by about 1 inch. Soak overnight. (You can also opt for canned chickpeas — just be sure to watch them closely as they roast to prevent burning.)
2. Preheat oven to 400 degrees F. Drain the chickpeas and pat dry. Add the chickpeas to a medium bowl and toss with the sea salt and 1 tablespoon of the olive oil, then spread them on a baking sheet. Roast for 60 minutes until browned and crisp, turning every 20 minutes.
3. Whisk the vinaigrette ingredients until combined.
4. Place the arugula in a large bowl. Add the chickpeas and remaining salad ingredients, drizzle with dressing, toss until coated, and serve.

4 More Recipes

Click the images to view more whole-foods detox recipes.



Creamy
Cauliflower Soup



Roasted Artichokes With
Tahini-Yogurt Sauce



Honey-Fermented
Garlic



Cucumber-
Pineapple Smoothie



The Pros and Cons of a Raw-Food Diet

When it comes to optimizing your nutrition, raw-food diets have many passionate advocates. However, the benefits vary among people.

A raw-food diet, by definition, moves people away from processed foods and toward whole plant foods — and that shift is almost always a good thing, says functional-medicine provider Will Cole, IFMCP, DNM, DC. “A plant-centric, whole-foods diet will beat out a non-nutrient-dense diet any day.”

Still, like any strict eating protocol, this approach has its limitations, especially for people with digestive issues. Many healing traditions, including Ayurveda and Traditional Chinese Medicine, believe that one needs a cast-iron gut to handle raw foods — and that it’s best to consume them minimally if gut health is an issue. In his practice, Cole sees many people with irritable bowel syndrome, small intestinal bacterial overgrowth (**SIBO**), and **leaky gut**, and he generally has them steer clear of too much raw food: “Eating raw can create a stressful work environment for a gut that is trying to heal.”

If you want to experiment with a raw-food approach, experts suggest trying it for a few weeks — **ideally during spring or summer** — and then evaluating how you feel. As with most diets, different bodies will respond to raw foods in different ways. Here are some tips to help you stay on friendly terms with your digestion.

- 1. Start with a 1:1 ratio** of cooked and raw foods and see how you feel, says Cole. If your stools are loose, reduce the amount of raw foods and eat more cooked soups and stews. If **constipation** crops up, dial up your raw-food intake.
- 2. Consider adjusting your ratio of vegetables to fruit** if you experience bloating and gas. “People with **underlying gut issues** tolerate more fruit better than more vegetables because fruit fiber is gentler,” says Cole.
- 3. Add a splash of apple-cider vinegar** or lemon juice to a glass of water and drink it with meals, suggests functional nutritionist Jesse Haas, CNS, LN. This helps improve stomach-acid production for stronger digestion.
- 4. Try taking digestive enzymes** before meals if bloating or gas is still a problem, advises Haas. It will help your stomach process the roughage.
- 5. Drink plenty of water** to help keep things moving through the digestive tract.
- 6. Add warming spices**, such as ginger and turmeric, says Akil Palanisamy, MD. This is an Ayurvedic way to help increase digestive “fire.”
- 7. Keep tabs on your energy, mood, cognition, and stamina**, says Haas. “Be open to feedback from your body on whether a raw-foods diet is working for you or not.”





Make This Cookies and Cream D.TOX Shake

Nutritionist Anika Christ, RD, LD, who runs the **Life Time D.TOX program**, believes that there should be no such thing as deprivation in a detox. “We [want] participants to have the right tools to support a healthy, full-body detox without feeling deprived [of] food,” she says.

Among her favorite must-try D.TOX recipes is this Cookies and Cream Shake.

INGREDIENTS

- 10 oz. unsweetened vanilla coconut milk
- 1 serving vanilla **Life Time D.TOX powder** (you could also substitute chocolate **D.TOX powder** or, if you’re not detoxing, your preferred protein powder)
- 1 serving **Life Time Fiber** (or 1 tbs. chia seeds as a substitute)
- ½ frozen banana
- ½ tsp. vanilla extract
- 1 tbs. cacao nibs (or dairy-free chocolate chips), plus more for topping

DIRECTIONS

1. Place all ingredients in a high-speed blender. Blend on high for about one minute until smooth. Pour into a glass and top with additional cacao nibs.



Eat More Dark Leafy Greens

The research is clear: The more dark leafy greens you eat, the better. An invaluable source of folate, fiber, vitamin C, potassium, and magnesium, these veggies also deliver health-boosting phytonutrients, which can help regulate blood sugar, support your immune system, and aid your body's natural detoxification processes.

Salads are good options, of course, but sautéing greens such as kale, Swiss chard, and spinach in a healthy fat will make their vitamins more bioavailable to your body, and adding aromatics, such as garlic and red-pepper flakes, infuses them with more flavor. In just a few minutes, a pile of greens will cook down and become sweeter, tenderer, and easier to digest.

To cook virtually any type of greens, follow this basic formula:

1. Stem, then chop or tear your greens.
2. Soak greens in a cold-water bath to remove dirt and grit; drain, and pat dry.
3. Heat oil and aromatics, such as garlic or gingerroot, in a sauté pan or skillet.
4. Add greens and sauté until tender and bright.
5. Enhance flavor with herbs, spices, citrus, or other ingredients.



11 Strategies for a Safe Detox

So far, we've shared lots of tips and recipes that can help support your body's natural detoxification systems. However, if you're thinking of doing a more formal detox for your body, it's important to make sure you have the right support. Just as toxins can cause problems as they enter and stay in the body, they can cause similar trouble on their way out. If we detox too fast, or without the right support, we run the risk of reabsorbing some of the dangerous chemicals as they try to exit the body.

When the toxins being released from the body's tissues outpace the body's ability to eliminate them, they stay in the bloodstream, triggering an inflammatory response and causing people to feel, in the unofficial parlance, crappy.

Symptoms of detox-related illness tend to mimic the flu: fatigue, nausea, headaches, dizziness, bloating, chills, elevated heart rate, brain fog, and increased joint or muscle pain. Taken together, these symptoms resemble the Jarisch–Herxheimer Reaction, sometimes called herxing or retoxing.

If you feel bad during the detox process, “it’s a sign [you] should slow things down or take an alternative approach because [you’re] overwhelming [your] detox pathways,” says functional-medicine practitioner Jill Carnahan, MD.

The first step in any safe, effective detox is to work with a qualified practitioner. Look for someone who has experience with strategic detox protocols and ask how that person works with patients or clients who have a detox reaction.

“At minimum, if you can’t do a detox alongside a professional, follow a program that’s created by one,” says Life Time nutritionist Anika Christ, RD, LD, who directs a **detox program at Life Time**. “I’ve seen so many programs that lack the critical components of a well-rounded detox.”

Once you’ve found a solid program, there are 11 strategies you can use to support and protect yourself during the detox window.

1. MAKE SURE YOUR SYMPTOMS AREN'T RELATED TO SOMETHING ELSE.

If something in your environment is causing an allergic reaction, you will feel consistently crummy. If you’re experiencing a Herxheimer reaction, you should feel better in a couple of days, says Carnahan. No matter what, consult your practitioner: You’ll want to determine the root cause of an allergy or other issue. Or you’ll want to slow down your detox protocol.

2. KEEP NEW TOXINS OFF YOUR PLATE.

Try to eat organic vegetables and fruits and clean, pastured-animal proteins. Otherwise, you’re adding toxins at the same time you’re eliminating them — and never getting ahead.

3. KEEP TOXINS OFF YOUR BODY.

Make sure your health- and **body-care products** aren’t introducing new synthetic chemicals into your system. Their effect on the body is no different than that of food. “If you’re putting it on your skin, it’s like you’re eating it,” says functional-medicine doctor Robert Rountree, MD.





4. MAKE SURE YOU'RE GETTING YOUR MINERALS.

Minerals are critical for optimizing the body's detox pathways. Two easy mineral-boosting strategies? Take Epsom-salts baths (for the magnesium) and drink mineral water, says Carnahan.

5. EAT YOUR (BRASSICA) VEGGIES.

Brassica vegetables — including broccoli, cauliflower, watercress, Brussels sprouts, kale, and collard greens — contain sulforaphane, which can increase the enzymes in the liver that break down certain toxins.

6. EAT THE RAINBOW.

The health-promoting compounds in vegetables and fruits are also usually responsible for their bright colors. The more colors you eat in a day, the more phytonutrients you'll consume. These powerful compounds assist the detox process and help protect the body against more toxin-related damage. Try to eat one food from each color of the rainbow every day (red, orange, yellow, green, blue, purple).

7. LOAD UP ON FIBER — AND DON'T FORGET PROTEIN.

Toxins leave our bodies in one of three ways: through urine, sweat, or elimination via the GI tract. Keep your digestion humming along by **eating fiber-rich foods** like beans, avocados, berries, peas, squash, and flaxseeds and chia seeds. Protein is also critical, says Christ. "Your body needs ample amino-acid pools to actually detox," she explains.

8. STAY HYDRATED.

The more clean, filtered water you drink, the more you urinate — and the faster toxins leave your system. Christ suggests drinking half your body weight in fluid ounces of water each day. "To help with absorption and increase mineral and electrolyte intake, add a crystal or two of Himalayan sea salt to each bottle," she says.



9. SWEAT.

Move toxins out through your skin by engaging in a heart-pumping workout or sitting in a steam or infrared sauna. "I recommend **sweating** 20 minutes per day during a detox, whether it's through a fast-paced walk, a strength-training session, or a hot bath," Christ says. "The bath also becomes a great self-care habit to help you relax and de-stress — which is also critical during a detox."

10. CONSIDER HERBAL AND SUPPLEMENTAL SUPPORT.

There are some **great herbal blends for optimizing liver** and kidney function. Consult with your practitioner about what might be best for your unique situation.

The antioxidant glutathione is vital for detox. One of the best ways to supplement with glutathione is to take N-acetylcysteine, or NAC, a glutathione precursor.

11. REST.

Getting high-quality rest can optimize all your body's functions, including its ability to effectively and efficiently detox.



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