

Client: Patrick Holford
Source: Psychologies
Date: 01 February 2008
Page: 134,135,137
Circulation: 115398
Size: 526cm2
AVE: 0

THE NINE-DAY

Detoxify, become clear-headed and recover pre-party season energy levels with Patrick Holford's New Year nutritional programme

DETOX

Never mind diamonds, your liver is your best friend. It is the greatest multi-tasking organ and, as a result its function – or dysfunction – has an incredibly important impact on how you feel.

While you've been having a good time over-indulging over the festive season it's been working hard for your benefit behind the scenes breaking down and eliminating toxins and excess hormones, balancing your blood sugar and producing bile, the stuff that helps you digest fat and cholesterol.

It also puts vital nutrients into storage for a rainy day. The liver is the unsung hero of your health, so why not give it a well-deserved nine-day holiday? In return, it will give you a healthy New Year.

Almost any allergic, inflammatory or metabolic disorder may involve or create impaired liver function, resulting in eczema, asthma, chronic fatigue or chronic infections, to name but a few. Because the liver struggles valiantly on, working hard, it can be some time before serious symptoms of dysfunction appear. However, you

may find that you are feeling tired and sluggish, blocked up or head-achy, with less tolerance of alcohol, sugary foods or caffeine. These are all possible signs that your liver could benefit from a detox.

My nine-day plan overleaf aims to support your liver's ability to do its job detoxing your body by removing anti-nutrients, or toxins, from the diet and replacing them with the very nutrients it needs for optimum efficiency.

You will be taking in a large quantity of the nutrients that are directly beneficial to your liver and which will actively support its detoxification function. It can then do its job of safely removing toxins from your fat stores and processing them appropriately without any ill effects. After the detox, you should experience increased energy and vitality, clearer skin, freedom from digestive complaints, regular bowel movements, fresh breath, clearer sinuses, fewer infections, brighter eyes and a sharper mind. ▷

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FIVE HABITS TO BREAK *For nine days, avoid...*

1 WHEAT: Gliadin, a gluten found in wheat, can irritate the gut. Give your intestines a break by avoiding all bread made from wheat and all commercially made cakes, biscuits, pastries and pasta. Also, make sure you check the labels of all other commercially made foods to ensure that no wheat is included. Instead, buy non-wheat, gliadin-free alternatives such as oats and oat cakes, brown rice and rice cakes, quinoa, corn, millet or buckwheat.

2 MILK: If I told you I was breastfeeding at the age of 49 – from another species of animal – would you think it strange? Milk is a common allergen, and adult humans are simply not designed to drink it.

Detox your body by having a break from dairy products from any animal source. That includes cheese, cream, butter, ice-cream, yogurt and food with milk solids, whey or casein on the label. Instead, buy rice, almond, coconut or quinoa milk, coconut or nut butter, or tahini.

3 CAFFEINE: The body treats caffeine as a toxin. For nine days, avoid coffee, black tea, colas and diet colas, Red Bull and other caffeinated or 'energy' drinks. Reduce your coffee intake to a maximum of one cup a day before starting your detox or you could be in for a ferocious headache as your body detoxifies. Substitute up to two weak cups of green tea, rooibosch, herbal tea or water. Stay away from decaf.

4 ALCOHOL: Give your liver a total break: alcohol is your liver's enemy. Replace with tonic water or organic grape juice in a wine glass so that you feel (and look) as though you're having an alcoholic drink.

5 BAD FATS: Take a break from all meat, all fried food (including any vegetables, chips and crisps), all processed foods containing hydrogenated (or partially hydrogenated) oils, commercial mayonnaise and all margarines and spreads. Substitute with essential fats from fish (but not fried fish), eggs, olive oil, raw nuts and seeds, and nut and seed butters and oils. Don't cook with them, though. If you are intending to use oil in cooking, use only olive oil or coconut butter.

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FIVE HABITS TO MAKE

Implement these liver-friendly dietary changes

1 DRINK EIGHT GLASSES OF WATER EACH DAY:

Ideally, this should be filtered or bottled mineral water. Your detox potential is enhanced if you have a mug of hot water with the juice of half a lemon twice a day, as this encourages bile flow, which helps remove toxins.

2 ADD SEEDS TO YOUR DIET:

Pumpkin, sunflower, flax and sesame seeds contain the omega-3 and omega-6 essential fats that help repair damaged cell membranes. They are also rich in the minerals needed for the detoxification and antioxidant enzymes. Fill a container half with flax seeds, the other half with the rest. Every day, put a handful in your now redundant coffee grinder and have a

heaped tablespoon or sprinkle on salads or vegetables.

3 EAT DARK GREEN LEAFY VEGETABLES:

Rich in vitamin C, folate, chlorophyll and antioxidants, vegetables like broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, kale and turnip contain a number of essential compounds that help support detoxification. Onions (especially red ones), spring onions, shallots and garlic produce the sulphur necessary for the detoxification process and can reduce inflammation. Eat them raw if you can.

4 SNACK ON FRUIT:

Eat berries, pears or apples and have a smoothie every day. One of my favourites is watermelon juice,

which is made by blending the flesh and seeds of the watermelon. The seeds, which are rich in essential fats, selenium and vitamin E, blend in with the antioxidant-rich fruit, which is high in body-detoxifying potassium.

5 TAKE DETOXYFING SUPPLEMENTS:

Take 2g of vitamin C a day, plus an all-round antioxidant supplement containing glutathione, alpha lipoic acid, vitamins A and E and resveratrol, the magic ingredient in red wine. Try BioCare's AGE Antioxidant, £14.95 for 60 tablets (www.healthproductsforlife.com). Do detoxifying exercises each day. The best kind of exercise to do is something that generates chi, such as tai chi, other martial arts or yoga. Alternatively, go for a jog or a brisk walk in the fresh air.