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Holiday Damage Control

Detox secrets revealed: five simple steps that you can follow to keep your body toxin--free...

Mary is a 32-year-old woman who came to see me when her life was coming to a standstill because of her ill health. She didn't have any health conditions or any 'known' disease, but she suffered many symptoms. Her work suffered because of her constant fatigue and low energy levels; and her productivity was affected by her diminished concentration and lack of interest in life. Her family suffered because of her constant irritability, mood swings, and depression. She started to get unexplained skin eruptions, headaches, and even weight gain, all of which she blamed on 'that time of the month'.

In reality, Mary's body was giving her many signals that she didn't pick up on. Our bodies have a way of telling us when something's wrong. The key is to know how to listen. And act.

We are exposed to toxins on a daily basis, and it is no wonder that our bodies eventually react to the toxins because of the back-log created from years of abuse. A toxin can be any kind of substance that causes harmful effects to the body, leading to conditions such as allergies, intolerances and general symptoms like the ones mentioned above. We are surrounded by potential toxins that come from the environment (e.g. smoking, pollution, heavy metals), the diet (e.g. alcohol, sugars, saturated fats), and internal toxins created from physical and emotional stress.

The good news is that the body has amazing abilities to detoxify. We are actually detoxifying on a daily basis. Toxins only become a threat when the abuse accumulates and creates a back-log that the body is incapable of clearing. Such backlog is often created after the holiday season, when our bodies are used and abused in the name of 'celebration'.

Ideally, after the holidays each and every one of us goes on a week-long detox programme where we only take in the right foods and drinks in the optimum quantities and quality. But the truth is, we don't live in an ideal world, and that is very often 'easier said than done'. So, this year - instead of forcing yourself on a 'new year's resolution', or admitting the usual 'who has time for a detox' – follow my ***FIVE simple tips*** to keep holiday toxins at bay:

STAY AWAY FROM THE BAD GUYS

These foods/drinks add to the body's burden and have plenty of negative effects such as drained energy, difficult digestion, and more. The longer you can stay away from these foods, the better you will feel. If you are very attached to some items, then wean yourself off gradually.

- Caffeine (coffee, tea, cola)
- Sugars
- Refined products (e.g. white flour)
- Dairy products (milk, cheese, etc.)
- Salt
- Fried foods and saturated fats
- Red meat
- Mayonnaise
- Carbonated beverages
- Juices
- Alcohol
- Cigarettes
- Over-the-counter medications
- Stress
- Pollution

INVITE THE GOOD GUYS

Fruits – add a variety of colourful fruits daily; it is best to keep sweet fruits to a minimum such as bananas, mangoes, etc.

Vegetables - add a variety of types and colours

Salads and herbs - add a variety of greens on a daily basis

Wholegrains - experiment with brown rice, millet, rye, etc.

Nuts and seeds – have a handful of raw, unsalted nuts and seeds daily

Fermented foods - such as live yoghurt and miso, which contain friendly bacteria for the digestive system

Raw foods and sprouts – these have plenty of essential enzymes for digestion

Organic food – try to buy organic food as often as possible; they are free of pesticides and sprays

Water – drink plenty (2litres +) of mineral water throughout the day; the more you drink, the more you flush out

GET UP AND DO SOMETHING!

Exercise in any shape or form should help the detoxification process as muscle movement helps the drainage process in the body. Exercise doesn't have to be a chore; it can include fun activities in happy surroundings. All you need is 30 minutes, 3 times a week; anything that gets your heart pumping and gets you sweating. Pick activities that you enjoy doing such as:

- Go out for a walk when the weather is nice
- Play a friendly game of volleyball in the garden
- Go for a short, intensive swim
- Make a date with a friend to go for a game of tennis – even if you can't play
- Go for a short bicycle ride to discover your neighborhood
- Try a mellow class of yoga or an invigorating class of kickboxing
- Dance for 15 minutes, or go crazy on a trampoline!

TAKE TIME TO DE-STRESS

Stress is the number one culprit in many illnesses and conditions. It attacks body cells and can create havoc in the body. If you are under a lot of stress, the best diet and lifestyle in the world won't help you. Stress creates free radicals, shuts down digestion and absorption, and robs the body of essential nutrients. Ideally, stress would be completely removed from your life, but if you find that your source of stress is completely unavoidable (e.g. financial problems, children, etc.) then you **MUST** look into stress management techniques. The definition of stress management is different for every person. You must find what works for you and start doing it. Most importantly, remember to take time to unwind at the end of each day. Some ideas include:

- Taking a hot bath in candle light
- Listening to soft music and escaping the mind
- Doing yoga or meditation in a quiet, peaceful room
- Exercising
- Doing something creative such as painting or playing a musical instrument

GIVE YOUR BODY A BOOST

On some occasions, the body will need some help in its detoxification mechanisms. In these cases, the following may help:

Skin Brushing

What to do? Buy a skin brush and use it for dry skin brushing. This method speeds up the rate at which toxins are expelled from the body.

How to do it? Skin brushing is not something you do in the bath or shower; you must do it when you are dry. First brush the soles of the feet, working your way up the legs, abdomen and arms. Always brush lightly and gently in long, sweeping movements *towards the heart* to increase circulation and improve skin tone and texture.

Abdominal Breathing

The way you breathe can have a big effect on your health as oxygen is a powerful detoxifier. Most people breathe in a shallow manner, depriving the cells and organs of badly-needed oxygen. Try the following method of breathing, and once you've mastered it, then you can incorporate it into your daily life whether you are sitting, walking, talking, working or relaxing.

How to do it? Lie down on your back and relax all muscles. Take a deep breath through your nose. As you inhale, feel your belly expand. Then, feel the inhalation expand until it fills your lungs to the top. Exhale through the nose by letting your lungs deflate gently. Repeat several times until you feel that your body is completely relaxed and rejuvenated.

Alia Almoayed is a Nutritional Therapist running a busy nutrition consultancy in Bahrain, offering nutrition advice to the whole Middle East community. She writes health articles for various publications, holds lectures and seminars on health and nutrition, runs a weekly live radio health programme, and heads a number of weight loss projects. Alia is the author of *I Want Healthy Kids*, a book on how to raise healthy kids, and *The Dream Body Eating Plan*, a weight loss guide; she is also co-author of *101 Ways To Improve Your Health*. For more information, to book appointments, to get regular email health tips, or to request Alia's special FREE Report entitled: *5 Secrets Your Doctor Won't Tell You About Your Health*, visit www.AliaAlmoayed.com.