Ask a Naturopathic Doctor

How to Do a Late Fall Cleanse

By now it's later in fall and cold, but one can still do a modified fall cleanse with all its benefits: recharged digestion, renewed energy, better sleep, improved appetite and clearer thinking.

There are several situations when one shouldn't undertake a cleanse: pregnancy, nursing, exhaustion, excess stress, and liver and kidney problems. For any particular disease condition, it's best to consult with a health practitioner familiar with cleansing.

Symptoms that generally indicate the need for a cleanse include: loss of appetite, cravings, difficulty getting out of bed in the morning, irritability, poor sleep, difficulty focussing, coated tongue, gassiness/bloating, unpleasant odours from sweat/breath/stool/urine and low energy.

Plan ahead for a cleanse and work up to it gradually, phasing out heavy and stimulating foods such as meat, wheat, dairy, coffee, chips and sugar. Detox tea in this phase helps the process: simmered dandelion/burdock roots are perfect for the season.

The bowels MUST be moving regularly before starting or the cleanse will "bounce", stirring up toxins in the body without giving them a chance to exit. This results in headaches, fatigue, irritability and joint pain.

A cleanse can be from a meal to a month. Start slowly and gradually build up because the benefits of cleansing can be wiped out by not being able to come off of it gradually. Traditional wisdom recommends taking the same amount of time to phase back into normal eating as cleansing. If not sure, start with 1/2-1 day cleanses and work up. This can easily be done weekly all year around and for some people is the best way.

Cleansing food: Breakfast varies according to people's body types and health. Strong, healthy types can simply have ginger tea. Medium types, especially if they tend to overheat, can have a smoothie with whey or vegan protein powder. Sensitive types do well with cooked rice porridge with almond butter, honey and non-dairy milk with ginger tea on the side.

Lunch and dinner is an Ayurvedic food called kitchari, a mixture of white Basmati rice with an equal amount of red lentils, spices (cumin, turmeric, ginger), ghee or coconut butter, and twice the amount of water. One can add chopped, non-starchy vegetables or they can be steamed separately.

Between meals, drink water or herb tea. If needed have a piece of fruit or a smoothie.

Cleansing supplements: milk thistle for the liver because it helps strengthen it as well as clean. The dose varies from a few drops in the morning ½ hour before breakfast for people with delicate constitutions/conditions to 30 drops ½ hour before meals twice daily for stronger folk. For the bowels you can use bentonite (1 tablespoon) and psyllium (1 teaspoon) mixed in 1 cup water a few minutes after the morning milk thistle, ½ hour before breakfast. This helps remove the toxins that are being pulled out of the tissues into the digestive tract for elimination.

Other tips for a successful and pleasurable cleanse: go to bed and wake up early; move lots, but gently (rebounding on a small trampoline is lovely as is yoga); rest lots if tired; treat yourself to a lymph drainage massage to help move toxins out; ditto for a sauna if you feel strong enough; colonics for chronic constipation. These activities help offset cleansing symptoms (see above).

Time for reflection, prayer, meditation and/or healing, either facilitated or alone invites the most important benefit of cleansing: inner growth.

It's best to avoid extremes and have a pleasant and easy cleanse—which makes us want to repeat the process!

Katherine Willow N.D. is a 4^{th} generation naturopathic doctor who is taking a year off to restructure the Carp Ridge EcoWellness Centre.

Resources for Cleansing

Books

Perfect Health by Deepak Chopra to discover your body type and how to balance it

Staying Healthy through the Seasons by Elston Hass M.D.

There are literally hundreds of others that are good, look around!

Products

Milk thistle: tincture (in alcohol) made by St Francis or in capsules, called Milk Thistle Plus, made by Genestra; available at the clinic if we still have some, at Nutrichem Pharmacy/Richmond Rd in Ottawa or online via SupplementsPlus.ca. There's also a homeopathic version: Carduusplex for very sensitive people. It's made by Unda and available through the same sources.

Bentonite clay liquid: any health food store

Psyllium powder: any health food store or the clinic

Dandelion and burdock roots: in any field in autumn or your back yard; health food stores in the tea section

Cleansing Foods: most grocery stores or any health food stores

Practitioners

Check with us: Carp Ridge Natural Health Clinic for a referral (we are closed until Fall 2015 for restructuring).

Email: reception@ecowellness.com or call Lori at 613-839-1198