



why not detox?

There's plenty to consider before opting to detox. John E Smith explains further...

The urge to detoxify the body can come from various impulses. That urge may come from good old Catholic guilt, keeping up with a current trend, or a genuine need to remove toxins from the body. The third of these reasons is the only valid one.

The first thing we need to consider is - do we really need to detoxify? Some toxic build-ups can result from insufficiency of energy - i.e. we are too weak to naturally eliminate those toxins in the normal way. In which case, we may need to tonify rather than cleanse.

The next thing to consider is: what else is going on in the body and therefore what is the most suitable medium to use (e.g. which foods, herbs, dietary or lifestyle approaches). For instance: do we have poor digestion, bloating of the abdomen, acid stomach, or pain around the liver. Some dietary approaches might increase some of the above symptoms and some herbs may be too strong for long-term use. In herbal medicine it is essential that we treat the person rather than take a general one-medicine/one symptom approach.

The third thing to consider is: the season. Serious cleanses or fasts shouldn't be undertaken in cold, damp seasons. However, mild cleanses can be useful at any time to keep the body free of toxic build up.



Herbs such as Rhubarb root, Cascara, and Senna, are extremely cooling and quite harsh; they may be useful in the short term (especially in cases of severe constipation) but are not ideal for long-term use, unless the patient is quite strong and suffering from excessive heat.

Raw food diets are ok in the summer, unless the person has a tendency to fluid retention, candida, or poor digestion.

Toxins can come from inappropriate eating regimes (e.g. junk foods, excessive eating) and also the consumption of alcohol, drugs, environmental pollutants etc.

A useful cleansing formula is Triphala, used in India for centuries to keep the body clean and toned at the same time. Triphala is described in India as The Mother of all Medicines. Its 3 ingredients Amla, Harada and Behada provide an antioxidant, anti-bacterial, and adaptogenic function to this mildly cleansing formula, making it safe for long term use. Triphala is known to improve digestion, reduce cholesterol, facilitate circulation, reduce high blood pressure, improve liver function and clear the skin and eyes. It is hardly any wonder that a common saying in India is: "If you have no mother, but have Triphala - you'll be o.k." 

powerful herbs by John E Smith

Dandelion: (*taraxicum officinalis*) white endive, lion's tooth.

I find it interesting how nature always gives us the right signals - if we are willing to listen or observe. I am writing this on a beautiful spring day and looking around to see 'a host of golden dandelions' - just what the body needs to flush out the accumulated toxins of the winter.

Dandelion comes from the same plant family as rocket, endive and other bitter salad vegetables. The bitter flavour is most important for the correct function of the liver and gall bladder (spring and early summer relate to liver function in Chinese Medicine). Bitterness is almost non-existent in the English diet; we tend to prefer sweetness (hardly any wonder that diabetes and obesity are on the increase).



Dandelion is very high in nutritive salts such as sodium, making it a useful herb in the treatment of blood toxicity, anaemia and skin diseases. It is traditionally used for kidney problems (due to its diuretic properties) and for increasing the activity of the liver, spleen and pancreas. Dandelion leaves can be added to salads or dried as tea. The root can be chopped finely and added to stir-fries or roasted and ground as a coffee alternative. This plentiful herb is presented to us just when we need it most. 

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