



Detoxification

by Jan de Vries

Detox is a word on everyone's lips these days. Celebrities swear that it gives them better health and lots more energy – and they are right!

No matter how careful you are it's hard to avoid all the everyday toxins around you. There are preservatives in food, chemicals in water and pollution in the air you breathe – there are even toxins in some prescribed drugs. A wide range of contaminants is also found in cosmetics and household cleaning products.

More than 100 different toxic chemicals have been found stored in human fat. Yet this is only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to out exposure to toxic chemicals on a daily basis. Many toxins are eliminated from the body, leaving no trace of their presence – but only after they've damaged our health.

The results can be a gradual build up of toxins within your body that, in turn, can cause a major strain on your body's eliminatory organs. The liver, kidneys and intestines, which normally filter natural toxins, can become overwhelmed with the difficulty of processing these man-made toxins. When this happens, digestion, circulation and metabolism can be thrown out of balance. You may notice symptoms such as constipation, bloating, weight problems, poor skin condition and loss of energy. It is possible to stay healthy in today's environment, but our bodies require significant help.

Common sense tells us that we should eat a balanced, nutritious diet, drink up to eight glasses of water each day and take the time

to chew and digest our food properly. We know this will help to gain the maximum benefit from our food and help us eliminate waste efficiently. However, unless the body is capable of properly digesting the foods, they can never be properly assimilated, nor can elimination be complete. The partially digested, incompletely assimilated and poorly eliminated results add up to TOXINS, cumulative in blood, lymph, tissues, muscles and brain.

Being a couch potato has become a way of life but regular exercise can also be a way of protecting against environmental toxins. One of the body's most important methods of natural detoxification is through perspiration. In other words 'we literally 'sweat out' toxins, from drugs to heavy metals and pesticides.

The consequences of exposure to toxins can also be minimised thanks to the liver. The liver is responsible for detoxifying and filtering more than a litre of blood per minute. In addition to its other functions, including:

- Breaking down the body's own natural hormones, such as oestrogen and cortisol
- Producing secretions, such as bile for digestion.
- Playing a critical role in carbohydrate, fat and protein metabolism, as well as storage of vitamins.

It has a few enemies (nicotine, alcohol and too much animal fat) and a few very good friends (one of which is oxygen).

However, the liver won't be able to perform its many essential, wide-ranging functions, necessary to health, if it has been damaged by an onslaught of toxic chemicals, bacterial invaders, alcohol abuse or even some over-the-counter and prescription drugs. To enable the liver to carry out its work properly, detoxification is necessary. Therefore the use of a quality herbal liver tonic can be extremely important for healthy living.

Milk Thistle is excellent for helping people deal with toxic overload. This herbal powerhouse, which blends nature's own powerful healing nutrients with cutting-edge science and technology, is available in health food stores.

This natural miracle healer has long been used to treat liver disorders and is one of the most thoroughly scientifically validated plant extracts. Anyone who grew up using recreational drugs or living in urban or other areas of chemical pollution – in fact, anybody living in this modern chemical world – would benefit from the use of milk thistle.

Dr Megan Shields MD writes that milk thistle gives superior protection in a toxic world. As a family practitioner and detoxification expert, Dr Shields has treated several thousand people for both acute and low-level chemical exposure. Her patients have included painters and decorators, firemen, farm workers, families exposed to fumigation chemicals, people whose drinking water was contaminated with solvents, factory workers, people exposed to toxic chemicals in their carpeting, children exposed to radiation and, unfortunately, increasing numbers of people who are addicted to recreational drugs or those prescribed by well-meaning doctors.

We don't know all the reasons why milk thistle is so helpful to the liver, even when it is under severe toxic stress. But we do know that it stimulates the liver's production of antioxidants, helping prevent further damage. It also builds up levels of glutathione, a small, protein-based molecule that helps the body metabolise pesticides and other environmental toxins. According to research, we have learned that milk thistle also has anti-inflammatory effects and stimulates protein synthesis, causing enhanced production of new liver cells to replace those that have been damaged.

The list of studies on milk thistle's liver-production benefits is long and convincing. Its place in the *materia medica* of natural healing is safely assured. In Shields' words it has quickly become recognised as 'the Cadillac of liver protectants'.

We can also reduce our exposure to environmental toxins and reduce stress on our liver by making some simple dietary changes. Be sure to eat organic vegetables, fruits and grains whenever possible, as these substantially reduce exposure to environmental toxins because they are not contaminated with pesticides and because they provide fibre which helps absorb and transport toxins from the body. Avoid processed foods, especially products with unsafe additives, such as aspartame, saccharin and artificial colours.

Purchase safe cleaning products and take other measures to eliminate toxic inputs to the home environment.

An ancient philosopher taught, "What will cure, will prevent; what will prevent will cure." Modern man knows prevention is better than cure, but what modern man knows and what he does are often different things and often common sense is left far behind! The philosophy of good health is built upon the foundation of understanding.

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