

Honor Your Body with a Dietary Cleanse

For the first time in my life, I gained a few pounds over the holidays. I allowed myself to eat things I never eat, and I was a lot less active than I usually am. It was time to renew my commitment to my health and well-being, so I decided to undertake a metabolic cleanse – five days of eating only vegetables, fruit, and brown rice. I had been doing this cleanse quarterly but had missed the last two, so I felt well overdue.

If taking better care of your body is one of your intentions for 2008, it might behoove you to consider a gentle cleanse. Abstaining from your regular diet in order to detoxify your body from the excesses that accumulate over time is an ancient practice, one that is revered in many cultures and even religions. Removing items like meat, nuts, oils, dairy, and cheese from your diet, as well as salt, sugar, and alcohol, all

while drinking lots of water and vegetable juices, can flush toxins away. You're left feeling refreshed and reinvigorated.

Fasting works, too, but I don't advocate starving. It's not fun. And I believe you can make detoxing a fun and intentional way to demonstrate your seriousness in taking care of your health. Why do I think it can be fun? Because I've done it myself a few times – in fact, just recently, and I had a great time while doing it! I began to sleep better after just the first cleanse day, and my energy level skyrocketed on the second day. My skin looked better than it had for months. My taste buds perked up, and I lost the few pounds I had put on. Best of all, I strengthened my resolve to be more conscious of what I put in my body. So that you can have fun whilst cleansing, I'm willing to give you a few pointers so that you can benefit from my experience:

Cleanse Pointer #1: Schedule it well. Don't begin your cleanse on the Monday of a crazy week, one that's so busy you don't even know how you'll get through it. Dietary cleanses require thoughtfulness and time to shop for and prepare your meals. I began mine on a Saturday, because the early part of my week is less harried than the latter part – and also because the organic produce market I frequent is only open on the weekends. This way, I could stock up on the freshest fruits and vegetables available, and boy, did I!

Cleanse Pointer #2: Shop for it. A lot of people suffer on a fruit and vegetable cleanse because they think it means they can only eat salads and boring steamed vegetables. The key to success is creativity. Find a few vegetarian recipes, and then shop for ingredients accordingly. I'm practically addicted to this mineral broth I learned how to make last year. I drink it for breakfast and use it as a base for other recipes and soups, so I bought enough vegetables to make two huge batches of this yummy vegetable broth. I bought salad greens, sure, but I also got things to juice like a pineapple, cucumbers, apples, and ginger. I got green beans and broccoli, kale, and leeks. I grabbed everything that

looked good. And then I put on my apron and got busy.

Cleanse Pointer #3: Get creative. The first couple of times I embarked on a cleanse, I only ate raw and steamed vegetables and raw fruit. By the end of five days, I wasn't too inclined to ever eat that way again. This time, I decided that my ultimate goal was to wean myself off the sugar and cheese I had gradually allowed back into my diet, so I gave myself permission to cook my vegetables. I added them to my mineral broth for delicious and satisfying soups. I piled them on the barbeque and grilled up some pineapple while I was at it. My mouth is watering now at the memory of it! I baked up a couple of halved acorn squashes and filled the velvety indentation inside with a medley of broccoli, rice, mushrooms, and yellow squash. I didn't feel deprived at all. Just full! And I learned some things about myself, like: I missed salt more than sugar; chocolate is an option, not a necessity; and although I like the taste of coffee, I can really take it or leave it.

Cleanse Pointer #4 – Now make it a habit. The five days passed so quickly, it was over before I knew it. Noticing how good I felt, I reminded myself that if I had a cleansing day once every week or two, the minimal weight gain I had experienced over the holidays wouldn't have occurred. A one-day cleanse wouldn't require much preparation, and almost everyone has one day over the course of a week that's mellow than the other days. Sundays work well for me.

So if you're inspired to try a metabolic cleanse, I hope you can approach it now with a sense of adventure rather than fear or dread. Don't consider it a purge for indulging but rather as a way to become a better caretaker for the body with which you've been gifted. It's important to pick a cleanse that seems doable and to modify it to fit your needs and your personality. There's an energetic, shiny self in there, just waiting to be revealed.

Nancy Zampella is a freelance writer and nationally certified yoga instructor. She teaches weekly classes in yoga and body rolling and is also available to teach privately and to assist in choosing a detoxifying diet, planning a menu, or grocery shopping. She is currently pursuing her master's degree in Holistic Nutrition. Visit her online at www.yogalibre.com.



If we are what we eat, a gentle cleanse can reveal the energetic, shiny self inside each of us.

