

12 Detoxifying Foods to Help Your Body Heal Naturally

The word “detox” has many uses. But what is a detox? Do detox regimens work? And can detoxifying foods help you cleanse your body without relying on powders, pills, and expensive concoctions?

People often ask me about the best way to detoxify.

Am I a fan of infrared saunas? Or of chelation to remove heavy metals? And what about intermittent fasting, coffee enemas, or cleansing programs? Or Epsom salt baths and mega doses of vitamin C?

Some of these ideas can have value. But **if you want to detoxify, the first thing to do is to stop bringing toxins into your body in the first place.** And the place to start is with the food on your plate.

We now have the most addictive and chemical-laden food in the history of humanity.

The sheer number of food additives in use today is staggering. But the disturbing reality is that only the companies making them declare them safe. And they do so without any testing or oversight from governmental agencies.

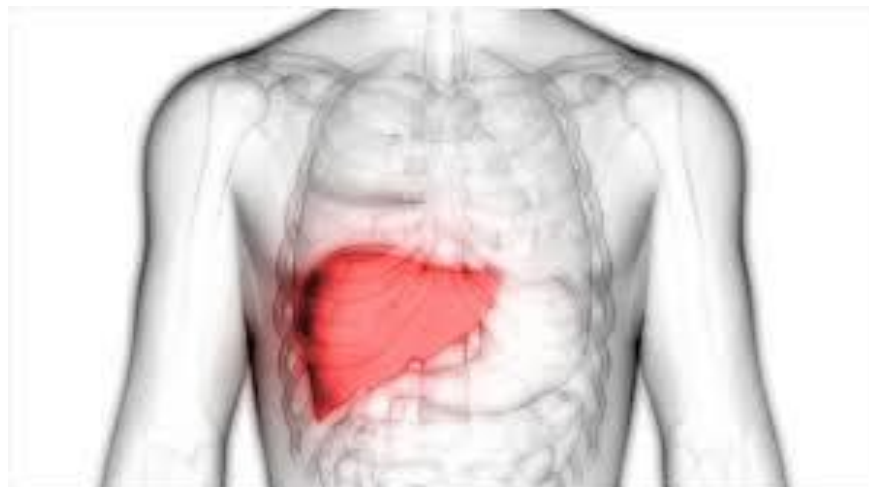
In a sea of toxins, it's nice to know that your body can do a pretty good job of handling them, most of the time.

How Your Body Detoxes Naturally (and Brilliantly)

Your body's detoxification system is constantly hard at work eliminating dangerous toxins and invaders before they can harm you.

Six organs, in particular, have critical roles:

The Liver



Your liver is your body's most powerful weapon against toxins.

It performs some 500 functions. For example, it *filters the blood* and *deactivates toxins*. These toxins include food additives, medications, and excess hormones.

The liver also shuttles nutrients into your bloodstream. And it transforms the rest into waste material that exits your body via your kidneys or intestines.

The Kidneys

Kidneys perform several functions, including regulating fluid and electrolyte balance in your body. They also help to control your blood pressure and deal with hormone secretion.

You might think of your kidneys as **the ultimate quality assurance team for your blood**. They receive and filter your blood. And then, they excrete wastes from muscle metabolism and urea from protein breakdown.

They also eliminate excess fluid, bacteria, medications, and other chemicals through your urine.

The Gastrointestinal System

From your mouth to your colon, your intestinal tract both **digests foods and helps to eliminate toxins**.

Intestinal microflora breaks down nutrients, which are absorbed into your bloodstream. Toxins are routed to your small intestine and removed from your body through excrement.

The Respiratory Tract



Your respiratory tract (lungs and bronchi) **removes toxins mainly in the form of carbonic gas, as well as phlegm.**

Your lungs are busy. They [breathe](#) in and out approximately 11,000 liters of air every day. And unlike the filters on vacuum cleaners and HVAC systems, you don't need to replace them on a regular basis!

The Skin

Skin is, technically, an organ. It plays **an important role in the elimination of toxins.**

Research has [found](#) sweating assists in the *elimination of BPA, phthalates, and heavy metals.*

And while it can be porous (absorbing skin cream, for example), skin keeps out all sorts of bad things. It has the ability to block dangerous bacteria and even poisonous chemicals. In other words, **skin is your body's first line of defense against a broad array of toxins.**

The Lymphatic System

Your lymphatic system includes fluid-filled nodes, vessels, glands, and organs.

Its **main purpose is to cleanse toxins and protect against invaders.** Also, it **carries waste away** from your tissues and into your bloodstream where it can be processed and removed.

Why we're overloaded with Toxins

Your body's detoxification system is powerful. But in our modern age, it's also likely under considerable pressure.

Pesticides, hormones, antibiotics, heavy metals, chemicals, and stress can all strain your natural detoxification systems. It's like one person is mopping the floor while another is stomping around the kitchen in muddy boots.

And *toxin exposure starts early. Before we're even born, in fact.* Testing of the umbilical cord blood of newborn babies has [revealed](#) an average of over 200 synthetic chemicals. And some of them have carcinogenic potential.

The effects many of these chemicals have on our bodies still aren't fully understood. Yet [evidence](#) ties many of them to health problems.

And **drinking water can be a source of toxins, too.** Studies have found an array of chemicals in public water supplies including [chlorine](#), lead, [Chromium-6](#), and drug residues from antibiotics, antidepressants, hormones from birth control pills, and painkillers, among others.

(For an overview of the problems with our drinking water and a review of some of the top water treatment options, [click here.](#))

Stress can also play a part. It diverts energy and other resources from the detox process.

The physiology of stress is rooted in the “fight or flight” response. The body interprets this as signaling a clear and present danger to our continued existence.

Detoxing when the body needs all its energy to escape from a predator would be like insisting on mopping the floor while a tornado bears down on your house.

But because most of our stressors are mental and emotional (traffic jams, financial worries, annoying emails), the body can under-prioritize detoxification even when it's the most useful thing it could be doing.

Given the prevalence of toxins in our environment — and often also in our bodies — many people want to know what they can do to protect themselves.

Can you remove these harmful substances? Or will they stay with you for life?

Does “Detoxing” Help?

The term “detox” has many different uses.

The most common type of “detox” is *a program that weans people off of alcohol and drugs*. That makes sense. Because when someone is under the influence of these substances, they’re “intoxicated.” That is, they suffer from the effects of toxins in their bodies.

In natural health circles, detoxes are typically used to *deal with environmental exposure to toxins, gastrointestinal disorders, and [autoimmune diseases](#)*. They are also used for general cleansing and preventive medicine.

Practitioners who offer detoxes often claim that they can aid in weight loss, support digestion, and fight inflammation, allergies, bloating, and chronic fatigue.

Because “detox” has become such a massive health buzzword, the term is, unfortunately, used to sell a lot of products and services with no basis in science.

Some detox programs [recommend](#) using laxatives or diuretics, going into “starvation mode,” going overboard with unsustainable exercise routines, popping unproven (and expensive) supplements, drinking diet sodas [sweetened](#) with dangerous chemicals, or even going on a grapefruit diet. *None of these approaches prove to help in the long run.*

Do your research before you consider a new detox regimen or program. And remember — **the best and safest way to detox is to eat real, healthy foods.**

How Detoxifying Foods Can Boost Your Detox Ability

Research shows there are specific foods that can help your body boost its detox power.

Unlike many of the popular “detox” programs and supplements out there, these foods help your body eliminate toxins. And they also provide many other positive health benefits, as well.

Here are 12 of the top detoxifying foods:

1) Cruciferous Vegetables and Leafy Greens

Cruciferous vegetables and leafy greens are on almost every list of the world's healthiest foods — and detoxifying foods are no exception. This class of leafy veggies includes broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, Brussels sprouts, and bok choy, among others.



A 2015 study [published](#) in the journal *Evidence Based Complementary Alternative Medicine* reported that [cruciferous veggies](#) **boost liver health through anticancer, anti-inflammatory, and antiviral effects**. They're also **high in fiber**, which encourages the excretion of toxins through bile and stool.

Spinach and **dandelion greens** — among other veggies on the list — are excellent sources of **chlorophyll**, which is considered the **top detoxifying plant pigment**.

And **broccoli**, in particular, has been [linked](#) to **protection against air pollution**. Broccoli sprouts also [contain](#) enzymes that protect against cancer-causing chemicals.

2) Lemon



A 2014 study [published](#) in the *Journal of Medicinal Food* found that the citric acid in **lemons can protect liver function** and **prevent oxidative (stress-related) damage**.

Another 2014 study [published](#) in the *Journal of Nutrition and Metabolism* found that **daily lemon ingestion — combined with daily walking — helps regulate blood pressure**.

Many people choose to consume [lemon water](#) to get their fill. All you need to do is squeeze fresh, organic lemon into a glass of water for an amped up version of H₂O. If you drink this a lot, you may want to drink it with a straw and rinse out your mouth with water right away.

(Be sure NOT to brush your teeth soon after drinking lemon water, or other acidic beverages. This could harm the enamel on your teeth.)

3) Avocado



Dubbed “America’s new favorite fruit” because of its rise in popularity, avocados have a wealth of antioxidants and other nutrients.

A 2001 study published in the *Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry* found that the **fatty acids** in avocados help protect against damage caused by d-galactosamine, a powerful liver toxin.

4) Green Tea



Green tea is universally considered a good-for-you beverage. And it's been used as a medicinal aid for thousands of years.

High in antioxidants, it **helps keep your body in balance, protecting against free radicals** that can cause aging and degenerative disease.

Green tea has also frequently been shown to have a **protective effect against certain types of cancer**.

A 2007 study published in the journal *Cancer Epidemiology, Biomarkers & Prevention* found that a **green tea concentrate boosted production of detoxification enzymes**, which play a key role in cancer prevention.

Note: *Pique Tea uses cold-brew crystallization (which eliminates heat and extracts the maximum antioxidant capacity from tea leaves) to create tea crystals — which deliver up to 12 times the antioxidants of regular tea. [Find out more here.](#)*

5) Apples

These popular snacks are rich in the soluble fiber pectin. Pectin **helps purge toxins from the bloodstream** and lower LDL cholesterol.



A 2006 study [published](#) in the journal *Phytotherapy Research* found that pectin can **aid in the excretion of toxins, such as mercury and lead.**

6) Garlic



A 2014 research review on the studies about garlic [published](#) in the *Avicenna Journal of Phytomedicine* found that this spicy veggie has a whole host of health benefits.

Researchers found that garlic can **inhibit the activation of carcinogens, enhance detoxification, and even protect DNA.**

7) Chlorella



With many positive effects for everything from mood to heart function, **some consider this bright green alga to be a wonder food****.

Chlorella has been shown to help with depression and anxiety, reduce excess weight, and lower LDL cholesterol. It also helps reduce liver inflammation.

Four grams or more (about two teaspoons) per day for at least eight weeks is the recommended amount to kick start the benefits. If you like, you can stir it into your morning juice or add it to a smoothie!

8) Turmeric



Also known as “Indian saffron,” this gorgeous yellow spice has been used medicinally for nearly 4,000 years.

In 2011, the editors of *Herbal Medicine: Biomolecular and Clinical Aspects* [reviewed](#) the evidence on this ancient spice. They found it to have “antibacterial, antiviral, anti-inflammatory, antitumor, antioxidant, antiseptic, cardio protective, hepatoprotective, nephroprotective, radio protective, and digestive activities.”

The primary active ingredient in turmeric is curcumin, which gives it its bright yellow color. However, **if you just eat turmeric straight, you may not absorb much.** I love mixing fresh and dried turmeric into all sorts of foods. And I always try to include black pepper because studies show that piperine (found in black pepper) helps to increase curcumin absorption substantially.

Note: Pura THRIVE has developed a curcumin supplement that uses a cutting-edge micelle liposomal delivery mechanism, which has been found to increase bioavailability by up to 185 times. [Click here to find out more.](#)

9) Beets



These bright-red veggies contain **high levels of antioxidants** and other health-promoting properties.

But beets are also a detox tool. A 2015 study [published](#) in the journal *Nutrients* found that **beet juice** can amplify specific enzymes that support the liver and aid in detoxification.

10) Blueberries



Besides being delicious, blueberries are nutrient-dense and are an **abundant source of antioxidants**.

They've been [shown](#) to lower blood pressure, boost vascular health, fight cancer, protect lungs, and prevent Alzheimer's, among other effects.

As far as fighting toxins, a 2011 study [published](#) in the journal *Applied Physiology, Nutrition, and Metabolism* found that the berries **enhanced the activity of the body's natural killer cells, which fight against cancer cells**.

11) Cilantro



Some plants can **bind to heavy metals and help your body excrete them**. Those plants are known as “chelators” and this flavorful herb is one of them!

A 2013 study [published](#) in *Scientific World Journal* found that cilantro can **enhance mercury excretion and decrease lead absorption**.

12) Ginger



Rich in phytochemicals — the healthy compounds found in plants — many people use ginger as a **gastrointestinal aid**.

Since the intestines perform so much detoxification work, ginger can **help boost your body's ability to process food and eliminate waste**.

A 2013 research review [published](#) in the *International Journal of Preventive Medicine* found that ginger **protects against oxidative stress**, has [anti-inflammatory](#) and anti-cancer effects, and offers a wealth of antioxidants.

A Word about Probiotics and Prebiotics

Probiotics (or good gut bacteria) can **help your intestines as they naturally release toxins and waste products**.

Foods, such as sauerkraut, kimchi, kefir, and pickled vegetables, are great examples of probiotics.

Then there are prebiotic foods, which serve as fuel for the probiotics. Those include jicama, onions, leeks, and asparagus, among others.

For more on how to include the right foods for supporting your digestive system, check out [our article on probiotics and prebiotics](#).

Foods to Avoid

In stark contrast to detoxifying foods, other foods tend to have higher concentrations of toxins. If you're looking to cleanse your body, you should avoid them.

These include:

Most Fish

Most fish flesh contains high levels of chemical residues. These chemicals include mercury and synthetic chemicals called polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs).

[According](#) to the CDC: “Seafood poisoning from marine toxins is an under recognized hazard for travelers, particularly in the tropics and subtropics.”

And because of the [plastic problem](#) in the ocean, **almost all fish are consuming micro plastics.** As a result, the micro plastics will end up in your stomach if you eat fish.

If you choose to eat fish, the least dangerous options for humans (all fish consumption is lethal for the fish) are low-mercury fish, such as wild salmon, sardines, mackerel, and herring. For more on fish, [click here](#).

Meat

In 2015, the [World Health Organization](#) classified **processed meats (bacon, lunchmeat, hot dogs, etc.) as carcinogenic (cancer-causing).** Therefore, it's best to avoid them altogether.

Even **unprocessed meats are often contaminated with bacteria** due to the processes, equipment, and condition of many farms and slaughterhouses.

Dairy

Cow's milk contains a whole host of substances — including powerful growth hormones — that can cause health issues in humans.

Dairy consumption has been [linked](#) to acne, asthma, heart disease, and many types of cancer.

A 2011 study [published](#) in the *Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry* found **up to 20 different chemicals present in cow's milk.** These included the anti-inflammatory drugs niflumic acid, mefenamic acid, and ketoprofen (all painkillers for animals and people).

If you want to ditch the dairy, you can opt for plant-based milk, such as cashew, almond, [soy](#), or oat instead! (See a doctor's thoughts on the healthiest plant-based milk [here](#).)

Genetically Modified Foods (GMOs)

The agrochemical companies behind GMOs [claim](#) that their crops [reduce](#) pesticide use, [increase](#) yields, [reduce](#) water consumption, and offer foods that are [tastier](#) and more [nutritious](#).

But in the 25 years since GM crops first came on the market, studies have found that they have led to **higher pesticide use**, and no meaningful improvement in **flavor, nutrition, yield or water** consumption.

Instead, what they've created are plants that are engineered to withstand massive dosing of toxic herbicides — and plants that function as living pesticide factories. Bayer's Bt. corn, for example, is actually registered with the EPA as a pesticide.

Many credible scientists have significant concerns about the safety of these crops for human and animal consumption.

In multiple studies, **lab animals fed genetically modified foods showed damage to almost every organ system studied**. Thousands of sick, sterile, and dead animals have also been traced to GM feed.

And **GM crops are typically contaminated with glyphosate**, which is a probable carcinogen and a known endocrine disruptor.

The primary GMO foods available in the U.S. are corn, soybeans, canola, sugar beets, papaya, and cottonseed oil. Many processed foods also contain genetically modified corn and soy.

You can avoid GMOs by steering clear of these ingredients unless they are organic or certified non-GMO. (For more on the difference between organic and non-GMO certification, [click here](#).)

Your Body Knows Best

Cleansing your body of toxins is about much more than an occasional detox program or diet.

The best way to cleanse your body is by eating and drinking detoxifying foods and beverages that keep it clean and healthy.

When you protect your liver and other detox organs, you protect yourself from many diseases and viruses.

Remember: Your body knows how to take care of you — as long as you take care of it!