

Practical Preventable Medicine



Livers and Detoxing

“To detox or not to detox...that is the question”

So how was summer, are you feeling a little toxic? Have you looked in the mirror and wondered why you still have teenager’s pimples? Are you grumpy all the time and feel overweight, lethargic and have sluggish stools or constipation? Whatever the reason, many people are drawn to detox regimes in their various forms as a simple way to clear our bodies of perceived toxins but is this always the appropriate course of action for all and what are these toxins anyway?

The Liver is the ‘General of the Army’ in Chinese medicine if the general is not sound in mind and strength, no-body can function well. This is because the Liver is the body’s detox organ. It percolates the blood constantly breaking down each chemical if comes into contact with to protect our bodies from toxic overload. Where do these ‘toxins’ come from? Many come from outside the body such as drugs we take for a headache such as paracetamol, chemical residues and additives in our foods, the stimulants we use such as coffee, air pollution etc. The Liver must chemically dismantle each one so that it can be secreted safely through urine or sweat. But these ‘toxins’ also come from within such as the hormones our bodies use to regulate our monthly cycles (if you’re female), our sleep/wake cycles and responses to life such as adrenalin.

Problems can occur in the body when for various reasons our Liver becomes overloaded and simply cannot keep up with the rate of dismantling as fast as needs require so the body must find other ways of coping. Sometimes it our skin that is used to clear out the excess hence the pimples or our digestion of disturbed with bloating or heartburn etc, or our moods are affected as the hormones that normally would be broken down stay in the blood circulation in excess quantities causing familiar PMT symptoms or grumpiness.

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So if you're feeling a little in need of a post summer cleanse, there are many herbal formulas that, properly prescribed, give liver function a boost. Most detox kits focus on liver herbs and can be helpful, however always ask a health practitioner that knows your physiology before taking any weight loss or liver cleansing programme. Never detox if you are pregnant, breastfeeding or chronically ill, are under 16, or have a heart, liver or kidney condition without consulting your health professional. There **are** gentle ways to cleanse! The best and cheapest is to start each day with a cup of hot water with a squeeze of lemon, cut down on non-prescription drugs including painkillers. Eat simple...fresh fruit vegies, especially leafy greens such as rocket, beetroot leaves, fresh grated beetroot, avocado and fish and drink only water for a week and see how you feel. No junk foods, and caffeine (except weak green tea) and you'll be surprised how just giving the 'General' a break can put the spring back in your step and a smile on your dial.

Until next time

Stay well

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