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The Purification Process: Healing for Modern Times

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This article is about thinking simply, in a new way, and using commonsense in your choices about your health. A choice I often recommend — for most people at least occasionally — is cleaning up your act, your diet, your relationships, your home and your planet, and supporting yourself to lighten up and heal. I encourage all of you to think about health and healthcare from the philosophy of Integrated Medicine.

As a doctor, I view any problem from the deeper true causes, which most often have to do with our lifestyle choices — the way we live. This involves what we eat, our level of physical activity and how much we require during our in-body experience to keep our energy moving — getting the sleep we need to recharge our core systems, and how we create and manage our daily stress — all to see how things add up for our health.

A basic philosophy of Integrated (Multidisciplinary) Medicine in regard to healing is: Lifestyle first, natural therapies next and drugs last. This article is much about lifestyle and an overview of detoxification.

When our overall attitude is one of positive life enhancement and self-love, we will nurture this treasure of our life force — our vitality. Clearly, a balanced mind has a beneficial influence on our

body and allows our heart and spirit to join in life's uplifting, full-of-potential moments. Health issues challenge us to grow and change for the better if we can claim our truth within our inner being.

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I discuss here what I call “preventive challenges,” making changes in advance, before you fall apart, and for the purpose of improving health and preventing disease. Ease can be the outcome of these healthful choices and “dis-ease” is the crisis created from years of bad habits, poor choices and a lack of understanding of your personal needs within nature's cycles.

Join me in this Quest for Health — keeping your body clean, available to your life, nourished and thankful for the changes you can make either through crisis or



wiser prevention. For many, health is a great lifetime challenge.

In most areas of the country now, we have farmer's markets, natural food stores, and our deck and yard gardens for plentiful produce during much of the year. Keeping clean should not mean keeping you too far from dirt, the earth — play in it, get in touch with where things come from and where they go. Be a human being, not just a human doing! Garden, shop and prepare your meals with and for those you care about. Eating seasonally from what is available in your locale is a simple message I have written about and shared for many decades. If you need further tips on health and chemical-free shopping and eating, check out my book, *Staying Healthy with Nutrition*.¹

Overview of Detoxification

The simplest way to understand symptoms and disease integrates Western linear (and commonsense) thinking, Chinese medicine and its philosophy of yin and yang, and the naturopathic approach to health and illness. Problems in the body (and mind) often arise from (the duality of) either deficiency, where we are not acquiring sufficient necessary nutrients to meet our needs and body functions, or from congestion, where we are having excessive intake, both from reduced eliminative functions and the repetitive over-consumption of food or non-food substances — such as caffeine, alcohol, nicotine, refined sugar and food chemicals. Even driving more than walking and talking more than listening can create issues.

With yin and yang imbalances, it is not merely one or the other, but a mixture, meaning that most people have some deficiency along with their toxicity. Clearly, in these modern times of processed and treated foods, and the chemicals used in our environment, we all have exposures to these substances. This stresses our body. Along with that, food nutrient levels are lower from lack of soil minerals. With the typically poor choices of eating by most people and the many temptations of modern markets (even sweetened and processed foods in the best natural

food stores), we just do not obtain all the necessary nutrients our bodies need to function optimally — vitamins, minerals, amino acids, essential fatty acids and the many phytonutrients found in fresh, healthy and colorful foods. Nutritional supplements can help here in obtaining all of these vital nutrients.

Naturopathically, deficiency and toxicity are the continuum of nutritional balance or lack of balance. People who are deficient may experience such problems as fatigue, coldness, hair loss or dry skin — and the ideal food choice help to be nourished with wholesome foods to stimulate and support healing. However, congestive problems are more common in Western, industrialized civilizations, starting from acute colds and sinus or allergic problems to skin rashes and digestive disturbances. Likewise, many chronic diseases, such as arthritis and diabetes to cardiovascular disease and cancer, most often come from long-term health-destroying habits.

Of course, these many health problems are not only from poor food choices. We are constantly dabbing, spraying and imbibing/inhaling chemicals from the air, water, foods, our vehicles, household cleaners, cosmetics and medications — more than ever before. Many of our acute and chronic diseases and dilemmas result from the clogging of our tissues and tubes and the suffocating of our cells and vital energy to support our ability to make healthful choices. These medical problems may be prevented or treated at least in part and often dramatically by embarking on a process of cleansing and detoxification. The detoxification process is the 'natural' way to heal!

The incorporation of dietary changes, including consumption of more fresh fruits, vegetables and water while reducing animal fats and proteins, and eliminating any damaging substance abuse — is the beginning of the rejuvenation process for the human body. This was discovered long ago and is still true today even though medical science may make light of it in deference to the quick solution to symptoms and diseases. Western doctors are trained primarily to name the disease and then prescribe a pill, a refill and



a bill — and the treatment is often not even related to the needs of the body's healing process. Of course, as a physician, I do this too when it seems like it will work, or the patient requests this quicker drug approach.

However, I ultimately believe in and consider the cleansing/fasting/detoxification process (they are different degrees of the same process of reduced toxin intake and enhanced toxin elimination) to be the missing link in Western nutrition and a key to the health and vitality of our civilization. In more than 40 years of medical practice, I have utilized extensively

substance habits or abuses, even addictions for some, which are a serious type of imbalanced relationship to one's true nurturing needs. This program encourages you to take a break, which may be temporary or lifelong, to such common habits as the daily intake of what I call the SNACCs — Sugar (as refined sugar and corn syrups — the "food" industry puts them in everything, it seems), Nicotine, Alcohol, Caffeine and Chemicals in foods and our environment. Especially watch the regular use of aspartame, and as able, minimize your use of over the counter and prescription pharmaceuticals, chemically loaded beauty products, foods and household cleansers.

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various detox and healing/rejuvenation practices for both myself and literally thousands of patients. I offer cleansing group support at my clinic — The Preventive Medical Center of Marin — in the spring, autumn and the new year.

I truly believe that cleansing and detoxification — the Purification Process — is virtually one of the most powerful healing (real healing of ailments and not just suppression of symptoms) therapies I have witnessed as well as participated in for as long as I have practiced medicine. Its effects offer rebalances for the body/mind and are preventive for many health problems.

I have written extensively about detoxification in my book *The Detox Diet: The Complete Guide for Lifelong Vitality with Recipes, Menus, & Detox Plans*, and in the last section of my 1,000 page book *Staying Healthy With Nutrition* in which I discuss both the medical and health factors of the cleansing process. *The Detox Diet* basics follow here to give you a clear idea of what is involved.

Two Key Levels to the Purification Process

The first is mentioned above as the clearing from any

To me, this is very often the first step in health liberation, freeing ourselves from the emotional connection and dependence on certain items to give us energy or sedate us. All of these substances can alter our moods and vitality, both immediately and over time.

Of course, many of us may eat a healthy diet of wholesome foods and do not have too many bad habits. I also see people often who exercise and eat well and are still not well.

The Next Level is to Look at Food Reactions

This typically occurs from the most common foods we eat and the most common foods available in society, that are what I call The Sensitive Seven — Wheat, Cow's Milk and Sugar as The Big Three, followed by Eggs, Corn, Soy and Peanuts. My book about this topic, called *The False Fat Diet*,² is all about the many ways we react to foods and the great variety of health conditions caused by these reactions. Following the healing dietary and supplement programs of avoidance and challenge will help discover the individual reactions and needs of each person.



The Sensitive Seven

- Wheat
- Sugar
- Cow's Milk
- Eggs
- Corn
- Soy
- Peanuts

*The seven most common food reactions, mainly due to the persistent intake of these foods in the diet and as the base of most processed foods.

Food reactions are quite common and often result from digestive dysfunction as well as inherent allergy and overconsumption (regular use) of the particular foods.

There are many factors that cause the breakdown in optimal function of the gastrointestinal tract. Overeating, eating too many foods combined at once, incomplete chewing, drinking too much while eating (which dilutes the digestive juices) and chronic stress all weaken our ability to digest foods thoroughly. Furthermore, many people have an imbalance of intestinal flora, where they have killed off their healthy bacteria from overuse of antibiotics, which is common in modern medicine. Other irritating bacteria may flourish, along with fermenting types of yeast organisms, or parasites taking up residence within our intestines. These cause an irritation of the membranes, and this affects our proper absorption of nutrients, causing abnormal absorption of larger molecules, often referred to as "leaky gut" syndrome. These 'toxins' entering the blood stream can affect our brain function, mood and energy level, and cause secondary immune and biochemical reactions. Our digestive tract has the highest amount of immune activity of any area in the human body.

Testing is available from naturally oriented MDs, as well as some chiropractors, naturopaths and acupuncturists who have studied gastrointestinal function, nutritional medicine and ecology. Most standard medical doctors have not gone to this level of health knowledge to be able to help in this more subtle and preventive (not-yet-diseased) state.

Healing the Gastrointestinal Tract is Paramount to Regaining Our Overall Health

I discuss in *The Detox Diet, the 5R program for re-establishing digestive health*.

- **Rebalance** – your diet and your lifestyle. In other words, you may need to eat differently and live more healthfully, even thinking in a more positive way. Your digestion is so sensitive to your stresses and emotions.
- **Remove** – any offending organisms. This can be done with herbal medicines or pharmaceuticals. Abnormal yeasts and parasites are quite common in these modern times.
- **Replace** – any needed digestive enzymes or hydrochloric acid (low stomach acid leading to improper protein digestion is quite common and undermines health).
- **Reinnoculate** – the right bacteria, such as lactobacilli and Bifidobacteria, to create the best environment for your digestive tract.
- **Repair** – by providing all the right nutrients to help heal damaged membranes and allow optimal function again. The amino acid l-glutamine is helpful, as are the B-vitamins, vitamins C, A, and E, zinc, plus many others.

Food reactions are generated through multiple systems in our body — digestive, immune, biochemical and hormonal — causing bloating and swelling in the body and gut, plus many other possible problems. These reactions caused by an allergic or depleted system make us more sensitive to environmental toxins. Allowing these reactions to quiet and clear can help those suffering from them to feel much better rather quickly. Following an elimination diet, avoiding our habit foods or commonly eaten foods as well as the most reactive foods, is part of this purification process.

After a week or two or four of this avoidance — once you get started and get through the fear — you will be clear and can then challenge yourself by eating one of these foods, giving it awhile to check your experience of any untoward effects. Usually I have my patients watch three different time periods for these food reactions, since many responses can be 'delayed.' First, watch immediately and over the first hour after eating the



food. Also pay attention to later in the day — several hours up to six hours later. Then, observe how you are when you wake up the next morning. Do you feel a little foggy or have a hangover? If you had any reaction to the food or substance, if you feel worse — fatigue, irritability, itchy skin, digestive upset and mood or energy changes are some possible reactions — or have any of the symptoms you had previously experienced, you are likely reactive to that food.


How do you Begin this Purification Process?

First, take an honest self-assessment. What are you hooked into? What are your habits/abuses? What do you mostly not want to give up? (This is often the culprit in not feeling optimal). How ready are you to take a break from them? Then, set up a plan, in writing, stating what you will do, for how long, and what you wish to achieve. Use a program you know or can read about clearly, such as my detox diet or a juice cleanse. It helps if someone you know and trust has done it before. It is also great if you can find a friend or family member to do it with you, to help each other get through any hard times, and to have someone with whom you can share your success.

The Benefits of Detoxification

There is often an improvement in mental clarity, physical well-being and spiritual energy, as well as the lessening of many symptoms. If any of these following problems are relevant, you can lower your body weight, your blood pressure, your cholesterol level and likely use less medication. Many people claim they feel “better than they have in years.”

In truth, what I attempt to do in my writing and practice is place your health and that of your family back into your own hands, because so much of it is up to you. Be your own best doctor. It really matters how you live — what you do, what you eat and what you think and feel. Take hold of yourself and your habits and do what you can to be vital and healthy. Use the latest rage and the oldest sage — the Purification Process — to improve your health. It is really worth it!

Time to get healthy and stay healthy! 

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1. Haas, Elson and Levin, Buck. *Staying Healthy with Nutrition: The Complete Guide to Diet and Nutritional Medicine*. (2006). Celestial Arts.
2. Haas, Elson and Staught, Cameron. *The False Fat Diet: The Revolutionary 21-Day Program for Losing the Weight You Think Is Fat*. (2001). Ballantine Books.



Learn more about author Dr. Elson Haas and his online seasonal detox classes at www.ElsonHaasmd.com