

Keeping Clean in a Dirty World

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Headache, brain fog, anxiety, depression, joint pain, obesity and thyroid issues are some of the complaints we treat every day in our clinic. These symptoms all have scientific research indicating that toxic exposures are a contributing factor. These exposures are typically toxicants, man-made substances introduced into the body with harmful effects, which are used in industry, agriculture, cosmetic and personal care products and household cleansers. Our exposures may be direct through the foods we eat and products we use or indirect through air and water pollution. There is no doubt that we are being exposed to both increasing concentrations and substances in combinations which have never been studied. This article will provide you with some actionable steps you can use to reduce your total body burden and improve your health.

I know that first paragraph sounds a little scary, but I want to assure you first, that your body is working all the time to detoxify itself and second, that you can help that process along. Your body has a built in detoxification system, consisting the lungs, liver, kidneys, colon and even your skin. With higher levels of exposures, our bodies may have difficulty keeping up with removing the amount of toxicants to which we are exposed. This is why our actions become so important. We can aid in our own detoxification process in three important ways:

1. Reducing or eliminating exposures
2. Providing optimal nutrition and targeted supplementation to aid the organs of detoxification
3. Ensuring that toxins have an exit

Eliminating exposures includes an evaluation of your occupational exposures, products you use in your home, personal care products and cosmetics and the food we eat. The Environmental Working Group (EWG, www.ewg.org) is a great resource with which to start. They have databases with personal care products and household cleaning products with ratings and lists of ingredients which clarify if those ingredients are concerning. You can use this to select cleaner products or you can find recipes for simple homemade cleaning

products. Their “Dirty Dozen” and “Clean Fifteen” lists of foods relative to pesticide residues is also incredibly helpful. Because it’s so important to only consume organic forms of the Dirty Dozen, here is the list for your reference:

DIRTY DOZEN - Should all be organic

- all berries, grapes and cherries
- apples and pears
- soft stone fruits such as peaches, plums, nectarines and apricots
- all forms of potatoes
- celery
- spinach
- bell peppers
- hot peppers
- tomatoes

When talking about organic foods, it’s easy to focus on produce, but I usually tell my patients who consume meat, dairy and eggs to start there. Animals raised for consumption or to provide milk and eggs also have detoxification pathways which may be overwhelmed. When this happens, toxic substances are stored, primarily in fat tissue, in a process called bioaccumulation. To avoid this further exposure, I recommend organic meat, dairy and eggs and reduced consumption.

Once you’ve eliminating your exposures, how can you support your body’s detoxification pathways? The first and best way is with the food you eat. Every process in the body is either nourished or neglected by our diet. Broccoli and related vegetables contain a compound called sulphoraphane which stimulates the liver to produce more detoxifying enzymes. I recommend daily consumption of cruciferous vegetables such as broccoli, cabbage, kale, cauliflower and Brussels sprouts, but the detoxifying effect can last for several days. Variety is important, too, though and other helpful compounds are found in berries, beets and green tea. There are supplements that can also be helpful. A close look at most

“cleanse” supplements reveals that most of those products are targeting liver first with the goal of supporting our innate detoxification pathways and colon second, which leads us to how we actually show toxic substances the door.

After the liver enzymes do their thing, the resultant “trash” needs to be taken out. The best way is through absorption by fiber in the intestines and regular bowel movements. Fiber moves through the colon like a broom and a sponge cleaning things up and hauling the trash out. You can definitely get plenty of fiber through your diet by including vegetables, oats, flax seeds, chia seeds and other plant foods. A regular bowel movement, at least once a day, is also important for colon health and detoxification.

We also excrete toxic substances through our sweat with levels of various substances two to tens higher than in blood. Sweating can be induced by the use of sauna or exercise. Sauna has some additional benefits, especially infra red sauna, which penetrates deeply and stimulates circulation. Sauna and sweating are so effective that one a study of firefighters who were disabled by toxic occupational exposures had a 70-90% reduction in symptoms after only one month of treatment using daily sauna. There are some contraindications to sauna, so please discuss with your doctor before beginning a sauna practice.

The above suggestions can feel overwhelming and we can never truly eliminate all exposures, so control what you can and try not to stress about the rest. For guidance during this process and an individualized plan, the physicians at True Health Medicine are available and accepting new patients. Visit www.TrueHealthMedicine.com for more information.



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