

## **Start 2008 with a Clean Sweep**

Living in West Marin we expect that we have a cleaner environment than the one over the hill. But most of us spend some time on the “other side” and are exposed to traffic fumes and bad air. However, toxins in the environment can be found in unexpected places, such as pesticides that have been sprayed by the county and drift on air currents or have been used on our food supply, and problem chemicals lurking in our unregulated skin care products. Of course, the recent oil spill in San Francisco Bay that contaminated West Marin beaches also probably exposed the many local and not-so-local heroic volunteers who helped in the beach and wildlife cleanup. Then there are the toxins such as heavy metals that may have built up in our body over time and not been completely eliminated. The body’s main detoxification organs, the liver and kidneys, can get sluggish for a variety of reasons. Many people today have poor digestive function that can lead to a build up of metabolic by products in the gut that can compromise detoxification pathways and lead to a variety of symptoms, some of which include: irritability, headaches, joint pain, itchy skin or rashes, fatigue, inability to lose weight and brain fog. Another cause of holding toxins is subtle food sensitivities caused by poor digestion and erosion of the gut lining. These food sensitivities can be identified with metabolic testing. When the system gets overloaded and the body cannot properly eliminate toxins, it tends to sequester them in the tissues of the body, particularly in the joints, the organs and the fat.

When this happens your body may need a boost in opening up the detoxification pathways, especially those folks who helped with the oil spill cleanup. Begin with the things you *do* have control over. Cleaning up the diet and eliminating as many of the toxins in the home environment as possible is a good start. Generally this means removing or limiting sugar, white flour, alcohol, caffeine and refined foods from the diet and substituting—preferably organic—fresh whole foods with lots of vegetables and fruit in a variety of colors, lean protein at least three times per day and some whole grains in their most unrefined form. (You may want to wait until after the holidays for this.) The foods

highest in pesticides that are most important to buy organic are: apples, bell peppers, celery, cherries, grapes, nectarines, peaches, pears, potatoes, raspberries, spinach and strawberries. Drinking at least eight glasses of filtered water a day is essential along with special teas that help cleanse the liver, such as dandelion tea. As for the home, make sure your cleaning products are nontoxic (baking soda and vinegar are great for many cleaning tasks), minimize microwave use and never microwave or heat anything in plastic. Avoid aluminum or nonstick cookware. If you can afford it, an air filter is a good investment. As for skin care products, there is an excellent website that rates a large number of products for safety. Visit it at [www.ewg.org](http://www.ewg.org).

Exercise is another way to jumpstart the detox process as the skin is another organ of detoxification. Besides burning calories and building muscle exercise induces sweating and helps move those toxins out. If you have access to a sauna or trampoline, these would help as well.

There are a number of supplements and protein or fiber powders that also can help to open up the detoxification pathways. While some people may have a few uncomfortable symptoms such as headaches in the beginning, it does not have to be an onerous ordeal if you go slowly and do a gentle cleanse. It is best to work with someone knowledgeable about detoxification to guide you. While this is not a weight loss diet per se, many people start to lose unwanted pounds as they release the toxins from the fat tissue.

What better time is there to detoxify than after the holidays? Start the New Year with a cleanse.

*Nutrition Consultant Bonnie Fisk-Hayden, MS practices holistic nutrition in Point Reyes Station and Larkspur. None of the above information is intended to diagnose or treat any illness.*