

Spring Cleaning for Your Body

Spring is a Perfect Time for a Good Cleanse



As winter draws to a close and warm breezes coax early spring flowers to brighten the landscape, you might be inspired to clean out your home. You may even do a deep cleaning, throw out clutter, get organized, and open windows and doors to welcome in the fresh air and sunshine.

Tradition also suggests that spring is a good time for cleansing the body. During the winter, people living in colder climates are typically less physically active and before the advent of modern transportation, people's dietary choices were limited as well. Having no access to fresh fruits and vegetables their diets were mostly animal proteins, fats and oils, and heavy starches like grains and potatoes.

Thus, when the first green plants of spring emerged, they would be welcomed and appreciated as the first sources of fresh plant food. Many of these plants weren't just thought of as food either; they were considered *spring tonics* and many health benefits were attributed to them. They were believed to thin the blood and invigorate the circulation to prepare the body for summer after the heavy diets and inactivity of winter.

Examples of traditional spring tonics include dandelions, red clover, stinging nettle, cleavers, sassafras, various docks such as yellow dock or sheep sorrel, lamb's quarters or goosefoot, raspberry and strawberry leaves, young garlic and onion greens, burdock, and various mustard-family plants like watercress, shepherd's purse, and peppergrass. Herbal medicine classifies many of these plants as blood purifiers or alteratives, which help cleanse the body by improving the flow of blood and lymph, flushing the kidneys and liver, and alkalizing the system. But, these spring tonics not only help the body detoxify, they can also reduce pain and irritation, clear up skin conditions, enhance immune function, and invigorate the body and mind.

Springtime Fasts

In certain spiritual traditions, spring is also the time for a major fast. Fasting is one of the oldest methods of cleansing the body. In times past, fasting in the spring may not have been completely voluntary, as long winters may have left food stores depleted. This is another reason the spring tonic herbs would be highly welcomed.

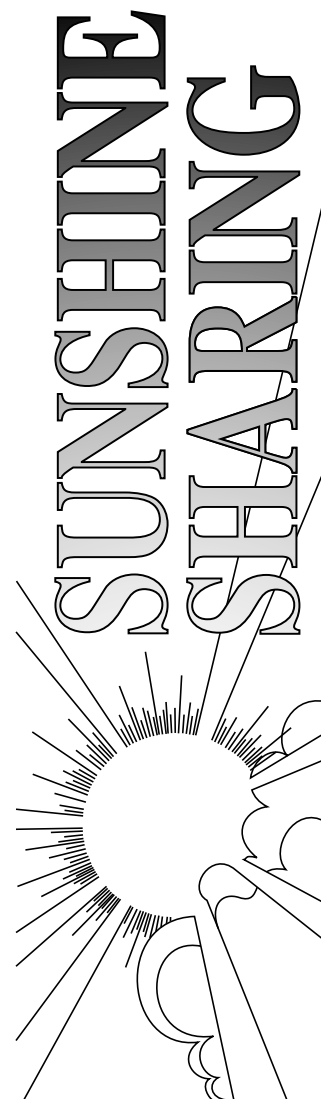
In keeping with this idea, the forty-day fasts in some spiritual traditions are not total fasts. Instead, they typically involve abstaining from the heavier foods eaten during the winter months, such as meat, dairy, eggs, and oil. Even today, a modified fast that involves abstaining from or reducing intake of heavier proteins, fats, and starches and eating more low-calorie, nutrient-dense vegetables is beneficial for health and can be part of your spring cleaning program.

Modern People Need Spring Cleaning

At first glance you might think that the traditional of spring cleaning the body is no longer relevant. After all, in modern society we have access to fresh fruits and vegetables all year long. But the truth is that many people eat what used to be diets limited to the winter months all year long. Many people's diets largely consist of animal proteins, vegetable oils, and simple starches or sugary foods. Think of hamburgers and fries, steak and potatoes, chicken and waffles, and pizza as perfect examples.

At the same time, few modern people ever consume significant quantities of the fresh, green foods traditionally thought of as spring tonics. Furthermore, modern people may also be physically inactive all year round, not just during the colder months of winter. Which is why we this spring cleaning might be more important than ever.

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Your guide to better health the natural way.

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In this issue of *Sunshine Sharing*, you'll learn how to create and implement a spring cleaning program, the use of traditional and modern spring tonics, modified fasting programs, and several complete cleansing programs to help you clean out your system to improve your health.

If you're never done a cleanse before, hopefully this will encourage you to do one. You may be pleasantly surprised by the benefits. Most people report that they have more energy, less pain, and can even think more clearly after a good cleanse. Let's start by looking at some spring tonic herbs.

Spring Tonics for Detoxification

If you have the time to go wild crafting you could do what your ancestors did and actually gather some of these spring tonics for your personal use. However, you don't have to, since many of them are available in capsules or extracts all year long. In addition, there are also many green vegetables you can gather from grocery stores. Whether you gather them from your yard or your local health food store lets look at a few spring tonics to get you started with a springtime cleanse.



Note that none of these spring tonics are laxatives or generally considered medicinal herbs. Instead, they are all nourishing plants that have gentle detoxifying and health-building properties. So, while cleansing may involve the use of laxatives, antiparasitic agents, or other more medicine-like remedies, the primary focus of your spring cleaning should be these foods.

Grocery Store Options

To start with there are many foods that act as spring tonics you can find at a grocery or health food store. These include kale, mustard greens, collard greens, green onions (scallions), water cress, rhubarb, radishes, and asparagus. You can also get cleansing benefits from alfalfa, broccoli, or radish sprouts. You might also be able to find wheat grass or barley grass juice or juice powder.

Dandelions

Dandelions are one of the heralds of spring. They pop their bright yellow flowers up in lawns and fields all over North America. So, if you actually want to harvest them, it's pretty easy to do. Just avoid harvesting them from areas sprayed with chemicals.

Young dandelion greens are best gathered before the plant begins to flower. Although they can be quite bitter, especially as the plant ages, they are edible and can be added to salads, blended into smoothies, or cooked as greens like spinach. Dandelion leaves are high in iron, potassium, magnesium, beta carotene, and vitamin K.

The roots have been roasted and ground as a coffee substitute, and the young roots can be cooked and eaten as a vegetable, although they can be very bitter. The flowers are also edible and have been used to make dandelion wine. Dandelion is a great cleanser for the liver and kidneys and you don't have to pick it to get its benefits as it's readily available in capsules and extracts.

Stinging Nettle

Although you have to gather them with gloves, the young leaves of stinging nettle are one of the most nutritious plants you can eat. They are rich in minerals like calcium, chromium, iron, magnesium, manganese, potassium, selenium, silicon, and zinc. They also contains B-vitamins, beta-carotene, and vitamin C, and are a rich source of plant-based protein. Nettles nourish the blood, alkalize the body, invigorate circulation, and reduce allergic reactions, all of which make them a great spring tonic, especially for people who suffer from springtime allergies.

Nettle leaves need to be cooked or dried to remove their sting. Cooked, they taste much like beet greens or spinach. Dried they can be made into a strong tea or added to soups, stews or other dishes. And, like dandelion, you can also get them in capsules or extracts.

Beets

Beets along with their greens, especially young ones, are another great spring tonic you can find at the grocery store. You can cook them and eat them or juice them raw. You can also add small amounts of the greens and grated raw beets to a salad.

Beet roots and greens help to alkalize the body, cleanse the liver, build the blood, and improve circulation. They are a rich source of the nitrates needed to form nitric oxide, which helps with blood pressure. They also improve digestion by improving hydrochloric acid production in the stomach and help liver detoxification and other body functions by aiding a process called methylation. You can also get beet root in capsules or powders.

Fasting and Detoxification

Studies have consistently shown the only way to prolong the life of laboratory animals is to reduce their caloric intake. This is why periodic fasting will not only make you a healthier person, it can also extend your life.

Restricting caloric intake can be difficult when food is so readily available. Especially, when much of it is high in calories and low in nutrients like vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants. These high calorie, low nutrient foods are junk foods because they fill you up but leave your body depleted and unsatiated—hungry for nutrients that these foods are missing.

Junk foods do this because the process of converting calories to energy generates free radicals and requires nutrients both to process the food and neutralize the free radicals. So overeating, especially when eating junk food, doesn't just increase weight, it also increases inflammation and accelerates aging.

Given all of these factors, most people will benefit more from a modified fast (abstaining from certain foods) rather than a total fast (abstinence from all food). This kind of fast primarily involves fasting from junk foods and heavy-calorie foods like animal protein and fats, vegetable oils, and refined sugars and starches. While focusing on consuming low-calorie, nutritionally-dense foods like the spring tonics previously covered.

Such a fast not only gives the digestive organs a rest, it also reduces tissue irritation, reverses chronic inflammation, reduces aches and pains, and provides the body with the nutrients it needs to repair damaged tissues.

Doing this type of fast, even for just a few days, can help you gain more self-control over your eating habits. It also allows the body to take a break from the many chemicals found in modern processed foods. It is also even better at detoxifying the body than a total fast. Fasting can potentially help with chronic pain, digestive upset, allergic reactions, obesity, cloudy thinking and improving your mood.

Fasting for Health and Detoxification

Juice fasting is one form of modified fasting that many people have found beneficial. This involves abstaining from all solid food for a period of several days to weeks and drinking only fresh, raw fruit and/or vegetable juices. If you have a juicer, you can make your own fresh juice, but you can also use frozen or fresh fruits and fresh greens and blend them into a smoothie using a blender.

In *The Master Cleanse* book, Stanley Burroughs shares a juice fast involving making fresh lemonade with maple syrup. To make the lemonade mix the juice of four fresh lemons and an equal amount of maple syrup into a half gallon of water. You can adjust the amounts to suite your taste but it's best to use grade B or even grade C maple syrup because it is less sugary and has a higher mineral content. He adds some cayenne pepper but this isn't necessary. Drink this fresh lemonade, along with extra water, throughout the day during the entire period of the fast.

A Spring Tonic Fast

Here's how to turn a juice fast into a spring cleaning fast. You start by making a batch of fresh juice every day using whatever fruits and veggies appeal to you, such as apples, carrots, celery, and beets. Or, you can make a smoothie using fresh or frozen berries and fruits like blueberries, raspberries, strawberries, pineapple, and papaya.



But don't stop there. Go one step further by adding various spring tonic herbs to your juice or smoothie. You can juice dandelion greens, beet greens, kale, and/or spinach with your vegetable juice or you can add powdered herbs like nettles, wheat grass, barley grass to your smoothie. If you have capsules you can open them and dump the powders in. To make it even easier, get some kind of *Whole Food Green Drink* powder and add this to your juice or smoothie. This should contain ingredients like wheat grass, barley grass, alfalfa, spirulina, chlorella, and vegetables like beet, spinach, broccoli, kale, and asparagus.

Fast for at least three days, drinking only your juice or smoothie whenever you are hungry. During this time, you should drink at least an equal amount of pure water each day. If you're constipated, you may want to take some cascara sagrada or a *Stimulant Laxative Formula* for the first few days, just to get the cleansing process started. Also, if you feel light-headed or dizzy try adding a protein powder to the juice or smoothie and/or adding a bit of high quality fat such as an avocado or taking a couple of spoons of coconut oil every day.

The hardest part of the fast is the first three days. It gets easier as your metabolism resets. So, once you're past the initial three days, you can safely continue this type of fast for few more days

or even up to three weeks. Only continue if you are feeling good. Remember this isn't a punishment; it is something special you are doing for your body. Listen to your body and discontinue the fast whenever you feel like it, but don't eat a heavy meal immediately. Break the fast with a light meal of vegetables and a small amount of protein.

Finally, if you have diabetes or metabolic syndrome, a vegetable juice fast is best. Smoothies are an option, but only if you use berries, which have less sugar. Do not use pineapple or other sugary fruits.

Complete Cleansing Programs



For an even more convenient way of doing a spring cleansing program, you can find a cleansing program that is pre-packaged. Such a program will typically contain some type of alterative or blood purifying formula, a laxative formula, and a blend of fiber. These will be separated into convenient packets you can carry with you.

If you really want to do a deep spring cleaning, you can combine a spring tonic fast with one of these cleansing programs. If you do reduce the number of packets to one a day.

Here are a few cleansing programs from which to choose.

The Chinese Balanced Cleansing Program

This is a general two-week cleansing and detoxification program created by a Chinese herbalist. It is designed to detoxify all the body's systems both internally and externally. It contains all of the following.

Chinese Wood Decreasing Formula. This is a blend of Chinese herbs to remove stagnant liver energy, improve the liver's ability to detoxify the body, and bring about greater balance and harmony in the whole body. It's key ingredients include bupleurum, Chinese peony, cassia cinnamon, and scute root.

Special Cellular Cleansing Formula. This formula is an alterative or cleansing formula developed as a general cleanse for the entire body. It contains herbs that aid the stomach, liver, lymphatics, bowels, and kidneys. Ingredients include gentian, Oregon grape, and two popular spring tonics, yellow dock and dandelion.

Stan Malstrom's Lower Bowel Formula. This popular and effective stimulant laxative formula contains cascara sagrada, buckthorn, Turkey rhubarb, and the spring tonic red clover.

Other Ingredients. The cleanse also contains psyllium hulls (for fiber) burdock root (one of the spring tonic herbs) and concentrated black walnut (which helps tone the bowel and remove parasites).

Additional Help and Information

If you need help with developing a cleansing program or deciding which program is right for you talk to the person who gave you this newsletter. You can also consult the following resources:

Strategies for Health by Steven Horne

Spring Tonics by Christine Dalziel (JoybileeFarm.com)

Colon Cleansing: The Best-Kept Secret by Jennifer Weiss and Vena Burnett

Three Day Cleansing Program and Mucusless Diet by John Christopher

The New Detox Diet by Elson M Haas

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Take one packet twice daily, morning and evening and drink at least 6-8 glasses of water per day. The cleanse should produce two or three semi-firm bowel movements daily. If stools become too loose, take only one packet a day.

Ivy Bridge's Cleansing Program

This program is based on a daily cleansing program called Ivy's recipe, developed by Ivy Bridge, an herbalist in Southern California. It's more targeted at cleansing the colon and liver than the Chinese cleanse. It also comes in two versions one with *Stan Malstrom's Lower Bowel Formula* and the other with a *Gentle Bowel Cleansing Formula*. Here are the ingredients in this program.

Fiber Packet. Both versions contain a fiber packet containing psyllium hulls, dried aloe vera juice, sodium copper chlorophyllin, and bentonite clay. This packet helps bind toxins in the bowel for elimination while also reducing intestinal irritation.

Environmental Detoxify Formula. Both versions also contain this blend of alterative herbs that includes classic spring tonic herbs like burdock, dandelion, red clover, yellow dock, and sarsaparilla. It also contains echinacea, milk thistle and a probiotic, *Bacillus coagulans*. It helps to cleanse the liver, lymphatics, and colon.

Bowel Formula. This is where the two versions of the cleanse differ. One version contains *Stan Malstrom's Lower Bowel Formula* discussed under the Chinese cleanse, while the other contains a *Gentle Bowel Cleansing Formula*.

The latter formula does not rely on stimulant laxatives like cascara, but uses magnesium hydroxide to soften the stool. It also contains triphala, a blend of three fruits from Ayurvedic medicine that acts as a mild laxative and bowel tonic. This formula doesn't just stimulate the bowel to move, it actually tones the intestinal wall to improve bowel health and function.

Like the Chinese program take one packet twice daily for two weeks and drink 6-8 glasses of water per day. If you want to use it as a regular daily cleanse, take one packet every morning before breakfast.

Weight Loss Cleanse

One final cleanse to consider for a spring cleaning program is this program designed to aid weight loss. This is a good cleanse to consider if you are overweight and/or have blood sugar problems. It helps to balance the metabolism, reduce hunger and stress, while aiding detoxification. It contains all of the following.

Intestinal Detoxification Formula. This is a tonifying bowel formula that combines digestive aids, like betaine hydrochloric acid, bile extract, pancreatin, and pepsin, with psyllium hulls and bentonite clay, to cleanse the bowel and improve digestion.

General Glandular Formula. This formula contains herbs to help balance glandular function by supporting the thyroid, adrenals, pituitary and reproductive glands with vitamins, minerals, and herbs like licorice, alfalfa, black walnut, eleuthero, kelp and schisandra. This helps balance the metabolism to reduce appetite and burn fat.

Paavo Airola's Liver Cleanse. This liver cleansing formula combines spring tonic herbs like beet, dandelion, and yellow dock with diuretic and liver herbs like parsley, blessed thistle, gentian, and goldenrod. It acts as a gentle detoxifier of the liver and kidneys.

Skinny Formula. This blend has been used to help decongest the liver and remove fatty congestion. It also aids digestive function. It contains hawthorn, papaya, licorice, safflower, and two spring tonics, chickweed, and dandelion.

Other Ingredients. This cleanse also contains chromium (which help balance blood sugar) as well as the *Environmental Detoxifying Formula* and *Stan Malstrom's Lower Bowel Formula*, which were both discussed earlier.

This is also a conveniently packaged two-week program. It's a good way to kick off a weight loss program, but it can also be used as a spring cleaning program. When used with the spring tonic fast or basic juice fast, it can help reset the metabolism, help remove cravings for junk food, and reset the metabolism for more long-lasting weight management.

Whatever you choose, if you've been suffering from chronic pain, digestive problems, allergies, cloudy thinking give spring cleaning your body a try. Your health will greatly benefit.