



## It's Not Easy Living Clean

Once attempted by only the most hardcore health nuts, **DETOX DIETS HAVE GONE MAINSTREAM.** Can a normal man withstand an intense one-month purge? *By Larry Smith*

**M**Y HEAD IS THROBBING (NO CAFFEINE), my stomach is grumbling (little food), and my bowels are seemingly immobile (unclear why). And it's only day three of my one-month detox.

Terms like "cleanse," "detox," and "purification" are tossed around haphazardly these days, from juice-bar menus to any magazine

story that mentions Robert Downey Jr. But the basic idea — that an intense, short-lived diet can flush built-up toxins from your body — has recently moved from raw-foodist chat rooms to TV talk shows and bookstores across the country. While no one keeps statistics on the number of people trying detox diets, consider that Americans spend \$40 billion a year on

dieting, and according to market research firm Mintel, more Americans are familiar with detox dieting than with the Zone diet, the Mediterranean diet, or a number of other heavily hyped plans. Some GNC stores now even push a two-day detox-program-in-a-bottle, in a display right by the cash register.

At the top of the detox heap is the trendy



Master Cleanse, a.k.a. the "Lemonade Diet," a juice- and tea-based regimen that generated buzz after Beyoncé purportedly used it to lose 20 pounds in 10 days for *Dreamgirls*. But the Master Cleanse and its cousins are basically fasts (see chart on page 60). I was less interested in a quick purge than a full lifestyle change. I wanted to look into a plate of raw veggies and see God.

Because lately that definitely hasn't been the case, I'll down a dozen wings and three beers on a weeknight without thinking twice. Over the years I've infused my spirit with uppers, downers, single malts, 40-ouncers, rare herbs, and magic mushrooms. Now, at age 38 and the moderately swollen weight of 155 pounds (at 5' 8" that means I have 18.5 percent body fat), I can sense the tide turning. For the past few years I have felt sluggish and have been sleeping miserably. So I wanted to see what a period of radically clean living could do for me. Would I have more energy? Enjoy fuller, lusher hair? Wield the sexual stamina of a Jersey Shore lifeguard?

I would soon find out. For four weeks there would be no coffee or alcohol. Processed sugar and starches were banished, as were red meat, nuts, soy, grains, dairy, and just about anything else that tastes good. Drug use of any sort was forbidden. For 28 days and 28 nights, come hell or herbal tea, it would be clean living for me.

#### I PUT MYSELF UNDER THE CARE OF DR.

Jeffrey Morrison, founder of the Morrison Center in New York City, whose practice combines traditional and alternative medicine. Many of his patients see him for ailments like chronic fatigue, obesity, and anxiety; others, like me, seek his guidance for a more generalized detox.



It's not a Betty Ford-style drying out but rather a plan to rid the body of the gunk lodged inside, thanks to our poor eating habits and exposure to a world full of lead paint and plastics (and they're everywhere; see sidebar below).

Morrison is slim and energetic, but he's not vegan, and when pressed he even cops to the occasional vodka (the least toxic of all spirits).

"I bet you drink vodka with soda, not tonic, right?" I say.

"That's right. The sugar in tonic's a killer."

"And do you ever try vodka and soda with lime and a bit of pomegranate juice — that's a great drink, huh?"

"Yes it is, Larry," he says matter-of-factly, sensing my withdrawal symptoms already. "We'll talk about it in one month."

He puts the cards on the table. What we're going to do, he explains, is eliminate the foods that gum up my internal works while adding nutrient-rich food and supplements. "Our goal here is to give every single cell in your body an opportunity to rest from processing all the crap we ordinarily put in our diet — alcohol, sugar, highly processed foods," he says. "Your body is like a closet that needs to be cleaned."

Experts disagree about exactly how much junk is in my closet. Ask a Master Cleanse devotee and you'll get an almost religious answer. As Dr. Elson Haas, nicknamed the Detox Doc, writes in his book *The New Detox Diet*, cleanses and fasts are "the missing link in Western nutrition and a key to the health and vitality of our civilization." But a lot of docs and nutritionists are skeptical. "Our bodies are pretty efficient at balancing things out, so I don't really believe in the word 'detox,'" says Lona Sandon, a registered dietitian and assistant professor of clinical nutrition at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas. "This notion that we're all full of toxins has gotten blown out of proportion."

Even so, I've been feeling less than pure lately. So Morrison designs a largely plant-based diet for me, with enough lean protein to keep my muscles from deteriorating. For a month I will dine on water, green tea, some fruits (but no oranges, grapes, or bananas — too much sugar), most vegetables (but no eggplant, legumes, potatoes, tomatoes, or peppers), and one small piece of chicken, fish, or turkey per day. I can season these with olive oil, lemon, and herbs such as basil and oregano.

Another staple of my diet is a shake made from a mixture of Ultra Clear Plus protein powder, lecithin (said to be good for the liver and metabolizing fat) and a pinkish oat fiber called beta glucan. On its own, it's disgusting. Mixed with frozen organic fruit it gets better. Like it or not, it's what I eat for breakfast and lunch. Total estimated calories per day: 1,200, down from 2,600 or so pre-detox.

Each morning I also swallow a few capsules of fish oil and a horse pill called Detox Formula. At night I take Probiotics 12 Plus, a tablet filled with "good bacteria" to clean my digestive tract. And to keep me sane I'm taking ashwagandha, an "adrenal tonic" that purportedly balances the body's hormone system to reduce stress and anxiety. It must be what you get when your doctor won't give you Xanax. But it'll have to do.

## What the Hell Is a Toxin, Anyway?

And other frequently asked questions about the author's month of no-fun days. —LARRY SMITH

#### Q. ARE THERE REALLY TOXIC SUBSTANCES INSIDE OF US?

**A.** Yes. We're exposed to some nasty stuff in our daily lives: heavy metals such as lead and mercury from old paint and pollution; chemicals such as dioxin from fertilizer; chlorofluorocarbons from our fridges and cleaning products; and all sorts of unnatural compounds found in plastic. "We do have the ability to get rid of some of these poisons via excretion, urine, and sweating — but only to a point," says Dr. Jeffrey Morrison, my detox guru. But it's debatable how big a problem these toxins are. "If we're talking about lead paint, you kind of need to be licking the window," says Lona Sandon, assistant professor of clinical nutrition at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas.

#### Q. SO...DID YOU GET A COLONIC?

**A.** Nope — per doctor's orders. "Think of the colon as an exhaust for your body," says Morrison. "When a person is constipated and very sick, there's no question colonics can speed up the detoxification process. But if the exhaust is open and running well, there's no need to do anything else for it." My digestion and disposal systems were running like a thoroughbred at the Preakness; thus I remained a colonic virgin.

#### Q. IF YOU'RE GOING TO DRINK, WHICH BOOZE DOES THE LEAST HARM?

**A.** Go with vitamin V. Vodka is considered the purest of all spirits, and even Morrison drinks it now and then. The oft-heralded red wine gets the thumbs down from Mor-

risson and other experts because it contains so many impurities, such as pesticides from the grapes.

#### Q. AFTER YOUR DETOX, DIDN'T YOU GAIN ALL THE WEIGHT BACK RIGHT AWAY?

**A.** Surprisingly, no. I put back on three pounds in short order (hell, I was hungry), but when the smoke cleared a month later I had kept off nine of the 12 pounds I had shed. Since the detox I've vowed to eat smarter. And I try, yes, I try, to realize that I'm better as Lightly Buzzed Larry than Larry: Fully Loaded — and I'm certainly grateful the next morning.

#### Q. DO YOU WANT FRIES WITH THAT?

**A.** I do. But, really, salad will be fine.





# Pick Your Anti-Poison

A sampling from the weird world of flushes, fasts, and other purifying plans. —NICOLE CUSICK

WHAT IT IS	WHY IT'S SUPPOSED TO WORK	HOW YOU KNOW IT'S WORKING	WHO IT'S FOR
<b>DR. MORRISON'S WEEKLONG CLEANSE</b>	A pared-down version of the author's detox, designed by New York City doctor Jeffrey Morrison. The plan: citrus fruit in the morning, raw or steamed vegetables in the afternoon, and plenty of green tea and water. You're also allowed some Ultra Clear Plus, a protein shake.	Enzymes in the citrus create a more alkaline environment in the body. This, says Morrison, aids digestion and detoxification.	Two to three days of unpleasant sugar, caffeine, and carbohydrate withdrawal  Anyone who wants to test his willpower (\$400 consult; <a href="http://themorrisoncenter.com">themorrisoncenter.com</a> )
<b>THE MASTER CLEANSE (Or: The Lemonade Diet)</b>	Torture. The cleanse calls for 10 days of ingesting nothing but a concoction of lemon juice, water, grade B maple syrup, and cayenne pepper. What's for dessert? A laxative tea and a big glass of saltwater.	Lemons provide vitamin C, and the cayenne loosens and breaks up toxic mucus in your digestive tract. Maple syrup provides sustenance. The laxative tea and saltwater flush? We think they speak for themselves.	Dramatic weight loss, a thick white coating on your tongue, strange body odor, headaches, and a constant need to be near a lavatory  Masochists; overnight celebs (\$52 kit; <a href="http://therawfoodsite.com">therawfoodsite.com</a> )
<b>THE 21-DAY DETOX</b>	A relatively straightforward three-week vegan diet designed by L.A. detox guru Dr. Richard DeAndrea. Week one, no animal products; week two, only raw foods; week three, a liquid diet with vitamin-and-protein supplements. And don't forget the optional enema.	According to DeAndrea, animal products introduce a host of toxins into our bodies; this diet eliminates such toxins and repairs damage they've done.	Plan on headaches, fever, irritability, acne, and gas for the first few days.  Those who do private-lesson yoga in their beachfront homes (\$150 kit; <a href="http://21daydetox.com">21daydetox.com</a> )
<b>THE HALLELUJAH DIET</b>	An 85 percent raw vegan diet based on Genesis 1:29, specifically when God says, "Behold, I have given you every herb-bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth and every tree, in which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat."	No refined sugar or grains, meat, dairy, seafood, canned foods, fruit drinks, alcohol, coffee, salt, pepper, or carbonated beverages? You're bound to notice a difference. Plus, it's God's will.	Devotees say the diet has helped them lose weight and get off various medications. Some say it can cure cancer.  The stout; the devout (\$12,000 buys three weeks for two people at <a href="http://HallelujahAcresLifestyleCenter.com">Hallelujah Acres Lifestyle Center</a> ; <a href="http://hacres.com">hacres.com</a> )

**THE COFFEE HEADACHES ARE THE WORST.** My head rings mercilessly for days. I had coerced my wife, who is either the greatest woman alive or the world's biggest sucker, into detoxing along with me. But then she goes away on a business trip, and I get the following e-mail:

"Darling, if your head is unbearable just have a cup of coffee. It's insane to suffer."

In other words, she just walked out of a Starbucks with a shot of espresso. The steeliest person I know had already been broken. And it was only day three.

Each morning I take a deep breath and suck down green tea, a grapefruit, and that god-awful protein shake, which the doc said I'd come to crave. He was right. I crave it because I'm starving. Also, my face is breaking out with huge red zits. When Morrison asks how I'm holding up, I give it to him straight.

"If a diet has been lousy and you change it radically, then your body goes through quite a bit of shock, and this is what you call 'detox reaction,'" he explains. "What's going on is that your body is tossing out the toxins any which way it can."

"But I've got red welts on my face, and I'm shitting green, and I'm starving."

"I never said this was going to be easy."

Giving up alcohol is not the shivering nightmare I'd expected, but there are challenges. A week in, I celebrate the one-year anniversary of a website I launched by throw-

ing a massive party at a bar in downtown New York City. It seems as though all 130 attendees want to buy me a drink, so I spend the whole night dodging them like a running back, clutching my glass of water with lemon.

The next morning I wake up with a very funny feeling: I'm not hungover.

Things start to improve by week two. I'm cooking more and I'm spending less. I don't walk around in a state of constant euphoria as some detoxers report, but I'm buoyant and giddy, and I'm sleeping better than I have in years. So what if I wake up hungry?

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**BY DAY 25 I'M IN THE GROOVE. I'VE LOST** 12 pounds, and I'm down to 16 percent body fat, the trimmest I've been since college. I begin to wonder: Could I live in this sort of postfood world? Yes, I could. Because I am unstoppable.

On the second to last day of the program, after sleeping for eight perfect hours, I take a long gander at my bad self in the mirror. The bags under my eyes are nearly gone. I feel light. I hop on the subway, bounce into the doc's office, and flirt with his secretary. I'm ready for my close-up. Morrison likes what he sees. "The diet

we put you on took you back to the bare bones," he says later. "The food you ate was very close to what our great-grandmothers probably ate."

I now see how I can change my habits without a world of pain. Sure, I miss going out for beers, and I'm beyond tired of worrying about whether a chef is going to put butter on my sea bass. But a happy medium is emerging: Eat clean at home, relax the rules when out — but, for example, only eat fries if they're *frites*. And although I can't wait for my first post-detox coffee, I've decided I'll limit java to the morning.

I leave the doctor's office with both a new

glow and a now-familiar grumble in my belly. I stop at a place near my office called the City Bakery, which has an amazing veggie buffet I'd been plundering all month. In line at the cash register I confront the devil in the form of croissant pretzels, lemon meringue muffins, and brownies. And as I feel the pull from within me, someone else picks up a peanut butter cookie, turns to his friend, and says aloud what everyone in that line is thinking: "You only live once!"

Which is why I don't reach for the cookie. ☹