



THE INSTITUTE FOR
FUNCTIONAL
MEDICINE®

VERSION 11

Detox *Food Plan*



Comprehensive Guide

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What Is Detox?

The word “detox” has two common meanings: 1) to withdraw from the use of drugs or alcohol, and 2) to describe the body’s process of making medications, hormones, chemicals, and other potentially toxic compounds less harmful.¹ The second definition is the one used in functional medicine. This process is often referred to as “metabolic detoxification” or “biotransformation.” The liver, kidneys, intestines, lymphatic system, lungs, and skin work together to process and remove toxins from your body. Toxins primarily exit via your stools and urine but also in sweat and breath.²

Metabolic detoxification is an ongoing process: every day, your body’s organs are working to eliminate toxins that come in from air pollution, plastics, heavy metals, microbes, and other environmental sources, as well as those generated internally during normal body functions.³ Among the most common toxic chemical exposures are pesticides and fertilizers used in agriculture.⁴ Exposure to these toxins commonly occurs through water, food, and the air.⁵

Other common sources of toxins that can increase your body burden include building materials, carpet, paint, household cleaners, metals used in dental restorations, fragrances, and personal care products.⁶⁻⁸ Exposure to air pollution can come from primary or secondhand smoke, auto exhaust, and industrial manufacturing.^{9,10} In other words, we are all living amid many chemicals, resulting in an increased toxin load for everyone.

The amount of toxins in a person’s body is a result of three main factors. First, everyone has different toxin exposures. You can lighten your body’s detoxification load by identifying and minimizing toxin exposures. Second, genetic differences impact how a person’s body is able to make enzymes that regulate detoxification. Lastly, an individual’s eating pattern and lifestyle can either help or hinder the body’s ability to process and eliminate toxins.¹¹ For example, if you eat nutrient-poor foods or lack enough fiber to support healthy bowel movements, you’ll be less able to process and eliminate toxins.¹² If you don’t get enough physical activity and good sleep, that could also affect your ability to clear toxins.¹³⁻¹⁵

Symptoms may occur when a person reaches their personal limit of accumulated toxins. Researchers are recognizing more conditions related to the buildup of toxins, including obesity, type 2 diabetes, metabolic syndrome, cancer, infertility, allergies, behavior and mood disorders, neurological conditions, and cognitive difficulties, along with diseases like Parkinson’s and dementia.¹⁶⁻²⁰

Some individuals experience symptoms in response to relatively low toxin exposures, such as in cases of multiple chemical sensitivity (also called chemical intolerance or toxicant-induced loss of tolerance).^{21,22} Multiple chemical sensitivity has been linked with an array of symptoms, such as headaches, brain fog, difficulty breathing, dizziness, and stomach upset.²³

Fatigue is one of the most common reasons a detoxification program is recommended. Other reasons for a metabolic detox program include overall poor health, weight loss resistance, or to reduce symptoms associated with toxicity.

What Is Detox?

A detoxification program also supports the balance of sex hormones, such as estrogen, testosterone, and progesterone.²⁴ Unwanted hormones must go through liver detoxification just as chemical toxins do before being removed from the body.

The goal of the **Detox Food Plan** is to provide nutritional support to help the body process and eliminate toxins over the long term. Once your health goals are reached, your functional medicine provider may help you reintroduce some of the foods initially omitted from the plan. However, they may recommend following many of its principles for life.

This **Detox Food Plan - Comprehensive Guide** provides suggestions to support metabolic detoxification. It offers direction on how to structure a healthy detox and wellness plan by providing tips on how to get started, what to eat, what to watch for, and how to provide the body with the nutrients to support detoxification.



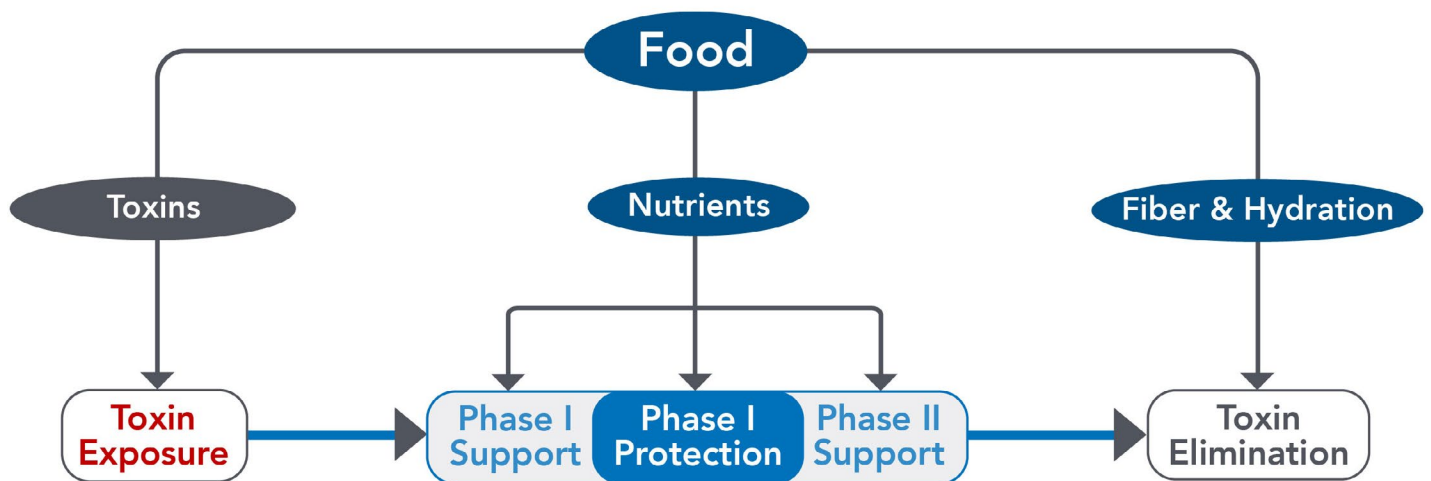
Food and Detox

Food plays a role in all phases of detoxification (see image below). Though food is sometimes a source of toxin exposure, food also supplies essential nutrients needed to support detoxification in the body. Choosing organic and whole foods over heavily processed foods has two potential benefits: 1) decreasing your intake of toxins and 2) increasing your intake of nutrients needed to support detoxification.

The liver is the main site of detoxification, which occurs in two phases, I and II.²⁵ Certain nutrients help fuel, regulate, and otherwise support detoxification. A shortage of these nutrients could mean an increased body burden of toxins. Cruciferous vegetables are highly recommended because they support both phases of detoxification.²⁶⁻²⁸ High-quality, lean protein supports phase II detoxification.²⁹

Phase I represents the first steps of detoxification, but harmful intermediate compounds can be created in the process. Between phases I and II, certain nutrients help protect the body against toxic intermediate compounds. Phase II helps neutralize these intermediates and transform them into compounds that can be removed through your stool, urine, sweat, or breath. Fiber and water from food and beverages support these elimination processes.

Food Plays a Role in *All Phases* of Detoxification



Features of the Detox Food Plan

While the Detox Food Plan reduces common food triggers like gluten and dairy, it focuses on long-term nutritional support of the major body systems involved with detoxification, such as the digestive system and liver. The food plan emphasizes eating healthy, colorful foods for life, reducing plastic use, and eating organic foods when possible.

One of the most important aspects of the Detox Food Plan is the emphasis on consistently eating foods that help your body eliminate toxins. The digestive system needs to work efficiently so that it can provide one or two healthy, well-formed bowel movements daily. Without consistent, daily bowel movements, toxin elimination is hindered (since many of them exit in your stool). Eating enough dietary fiber—generally 25-30 grams or more daily—supports toxin elimination.³⁰ Some toxins can be eliminated through urine, too, which is why proper hydration goes hand-in-hand with optimal detoxification.

The Detox Food Plan, more than any other food plan within the IFM food plan suites, is designed to support the liver. The liver is a very important organ for detoxification. When the liver is overburdened by an increased toxin load or nutrient insufficiency, greater toxicity and increased symptoms can occur. The goal of the Detox Food Plan is to support the liver and other organs of detoxification to help manage your toxic burden and promote overall well-being.



Features of the Detox Food Plan



The Detox Food Plan

Reduces food triggers: The Detox Food Plan reduces exposure to trigger foods that may be connected to gut issues and other health concerns. At the same time, nutrient-dense foods are emphasized to promote detoxification and gut health.

Many people with food sensitivities don't realize how bad they feel, or that particular foods are the culprit, until the foods that trigger a reaction are removed from their diet. Food **sensitivity** reactions may be delayed by hours or even days. Food sensitivities are usually the result of an imbalance in the gastrointestinal system that affects the immune system. Food **intolerances** are reactions to certain food compounds (lactose, histamine, etc.) that may occur when a person is low in an enzyme, resulting in an inability to properly metabolize certain foods.^{31,32}

After following the Detox Food Plan for a period of time, your practitioner may suggest a personalized food reintroduction. The goal is to expand the variety of healthy foods you eat, not to maintain a long-term restrictive diet. Reintroduction involves adding back one food at a time and observing whether that food is associated with symptoms. Foods that continue to provoke symptoms (physical, mental, or emotional) are avoided until they no longer cause symptoms. Once the gut is healed, many foods that initially caused sensitivity reactions may be reintroduced into a meal plan without symptoms.

Supports liver function: Protein is a key nutrient that enables the liver to effectively process toxins within the body. Specific amino acids (building blocks of protein) are required to process certain types of toxins.²⁹ So, high-quality protein is a cornerstone of this food plan to promote efficient and effective detoxification.

Encourages organic: The Detox Food Plan encourages organically grown, non-genetically modified (GMO) foods, including lean, grass-fed, or wild-caught animal proteins and minimally refined, cold-pressed oils. This food approach helps reduce your exposure to toxins, including pesticides and other chemicals. Another option is to ask local farmers who lack organic certification if they use non-GMO animal feed and seeds and if they use any chemicals to grow their foods. You might find they are using better farming practices even though they aren't certified organic.

Reduces toxic burden: Toxins are everywhere: in food, air, water, and even in personal care products.³³ It is best to start a detoxification program by first removing toxins from your diet (and home environment) as much as possible. As mentioned above, buying organically grown foods helps reduce your toxin exposure. You should also try to reduce your exposure to plastic-contained foods and liquids.³⁴⁻³⁶

Tips for minimizing intake of harmful substances include:

- Choose lean meats over fatty animal foods, as some pesticides accumulate in the fat of animals.³⁷
- Buy organically produced meat and other animal products.

Features of the Detox Food Plan

- Peel the skin or remove the outer layer of leaves of non-organic vegetables (such as lettuce and cabbage) and fruits to help reduce pesticide exposure.³⁸
- Remove surface pesticide residues, waxes, and fertilizers by soaking the food in a mild solution of additive-free soap (pure castile soap or biodegradable cleanser) and water.³⁸
- Cut away any damaged or bruised areas before preparing or eating food, as potentially harmful bacteria tend to thrive in those areas.³⁹
- Wash produce before peeling it so dirt and contaminants aren't transferred from the knife onto the fruit or vegetable.³⁹
- Consult the Environmental Working Group's annual Dirty Dozen List (foods that are commonly high in pesticide residues) and Clean 15 List (foods that are typically low in pesticide residues).
- Avoid foods that contain artificial preservatives (such as BHT, BHA, benzoate, and sulfites), artificial food colorings (such as Red 40 and Yellow 6), and artificial sweeteners (such as sucralose and aspartame).
- Limit use of canned foods (such as meat, fish, and vegetables) and plastic bottles or containers, which may contain bisphenol A (BPA).⁴⁰
- Choose safer cookware options like oven-safe glass, food-grade stainless steel, and cast iron rather than aluminum or nonstick pans.^{41,42}
- Use filtered, reverse osmosis, or distilled water for drinking and cooking.⁴³

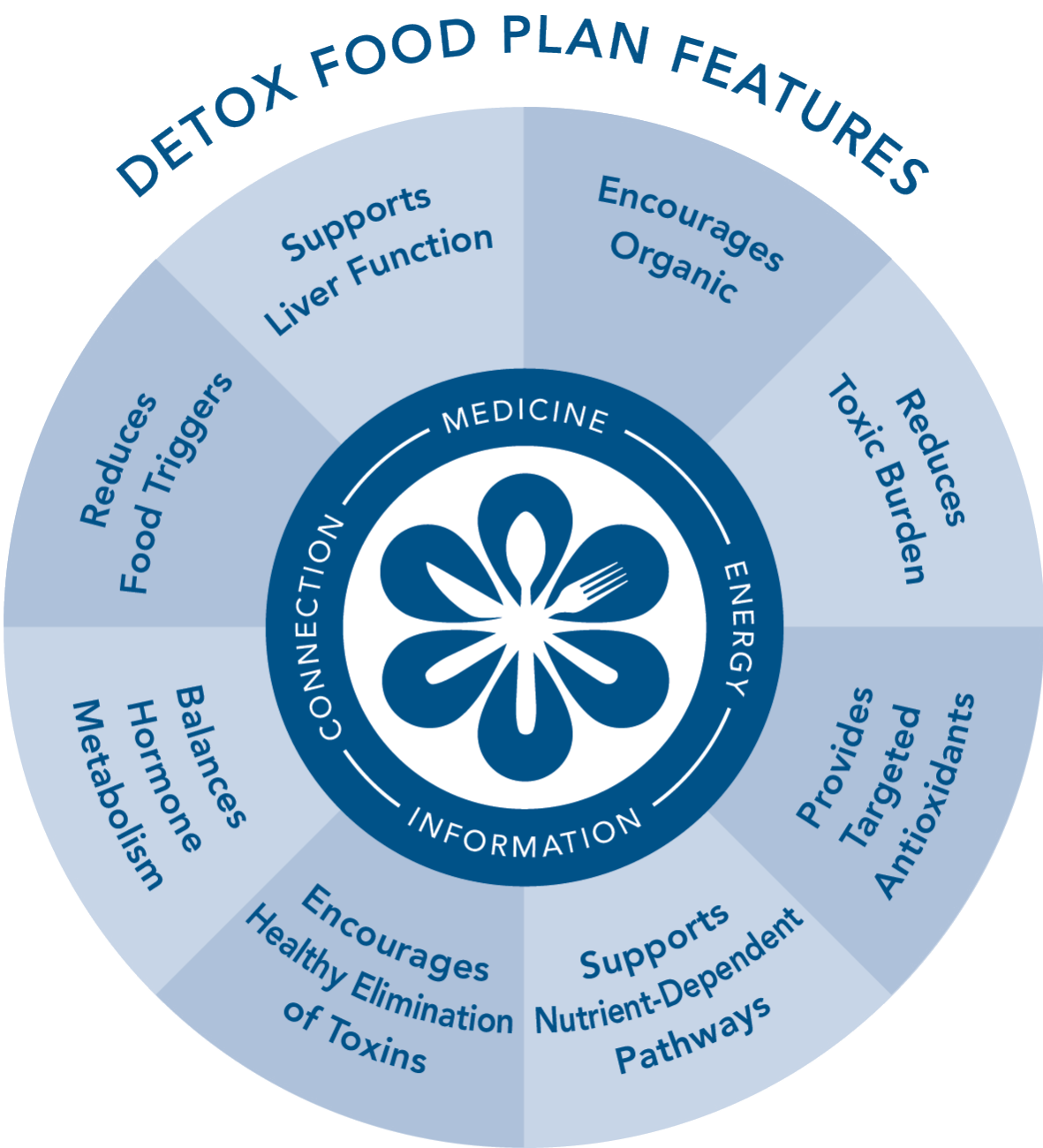
Provides targeted antioxidants: Antioxidants from plant foods like vegetables, fruits, legumes, nuts, seeds, herbs, and spices may help protect cells and support the body's natural detoxification process.^{2,44}

Supports nutrient-dependent pathways: This food plan includes nutrients that support detoxification processes within the digestive tract, liver, and kidneys. Phytonutrients in plant foods help protect cells from toxins and play a role in reducing inflammation.^{45,46} An eating plan rich in healthy plant-based foods has also been linked to kidney health.^{47,48}

Encourages healthy elimination of toxins: Toxins are removed from the body through the urine and stool. High-fiber foods and adequate water are featured in this food plan to ensure the healthy removal of toxins from the body.^{12,49}

Supports hormone balance: Whole foods support the liver and gut, which have roles in hormone balance.^{50,51} Environmental toxins have the potential to disrupt hormonal balance in the body.^{52,53} Whole plant foods that promote detoxification can support proper hormone levels.²

Features of the Detox Food Plan



Touring Through the Detox Food Plan

The Detox Food Plan is designed to give you a snapshot of foods to select from each day. Your functional medicine provider may provide alternate suggestions that are personalized to your specific needs and may include a calorie target or other guidance on food selection and timing of meals.

This food plan focuses on natural and whole foods to support detoxification and elimination of toxins. When making dietary choices to support detoxification, try to frequently include the therapeutic foods within each food group to get the most out of the Detox Food Plan.

Protein

Protein is an essential nutrient for detoxification. The building blocks of protein, amino acids, bind to toxins in the liver and support their removal from the body.⁵⁴⁻⁵⁶ When possible, include good sources of protein in meals for ongoing support of the liver's detoxification processes.

There are several different sources of animal and vegetable protein to choose from on this food plan. Some plant-based protein options are tofu, tempeh, legumes, plant-based meat alternatives, and soy-based dairy alternatives. Animal proteins include eggs, fish, meat, and poultry. As with the other food categories, quality is very important. High-quality proteins include lean, grass-fed, organic, and non-GMO sources.

Omega-3 rich fish like salmon and sardines are highlighted as therapeutic foods because of their anti-inflammatory fats. In studies, omega-3 fatty acids have been linked with a protective effect against inflammation caused by air pollution.⁵⁷⁻⁵⁸ When possible, check seafood source information.



Touring Through the Detox Food Plan



Aim to eat a variety of fish that are lower in mercury, such as anchovies, butterfish, catfish, flounder, haddock, hake, herring, mackerel (North Atlantic; Pacific chub), mullet, perch (ocean), pollock, salmon (wild), sardines, sole, squid, tilapia, trout (freshwater), whitefish, and whiting. Avoid fish with higher mercury content, such as king mackerel, marlin, orange roughy, shark, swordfish, tilefish, and tuna (albacore, yellowfin, bigeye).⁵⁹ Shellfish are omitted from the Detox Food Plan as they are often contaminated with toxins, particularly when farmed.^{60,61}

Soy foods are also highlighted as therapeutic for detoxification. Phytonutrients in soy, called isoflavones, have been shown to influence liver detoxification and may help the body produce estrogen in a healthy way.⁶²⁻⁶⁴ A number of research studies have shown an association between eating soy food products and reduced cancer risk.⁶⁵⁻⁶⁶ Choose organic and minimally processed soy foods to minimize your exposure to farm chemicals and food additives. Organic products are not allowed to contain GMOs (genetically modified organisms).

Therapeutic foods: fish and organic soy

Legumes

Legumes, including beans and lentils, are an affordable way to get quality dietary protein and fiber, which help with detox in the liver and gut.^{29,67} Aim to eat at least one serving of legumes every day. Options include soups, cooked beans, dips, and hummus. Try black soybeans in soup, add garbanzo beans or kidney beans to a salad, or make a bean salad of 2-3 different varieties with chopped onions and bell peppers. While all legumes are fantastic choices, black soybeans and edamame (green soybeans) are highlighted in this category for their protein, fiber, and isoflavone content.

Therapeutic foods: organic black soybeans and edamame

Dairy Alternatives

Dairy is not listed on this plan because most commonly available dairy foods contain toxins and hormone disruptors.⁶⁸ Additionally, dairy can trigger adverse food reactions and cause digestive symptoms for many people.^{69,70} There are several dairy alternatives on this food plan, mostly in the form of nut and grain milk. When buying dairy alternatives like soy, coconut, almond, hemp, oat, or rice milk, read labels carefully to ensure the products are organic and do not contain added sweeteners. Note that the coconut milk listed in this section refers to the boxed (beverage) variety rather than its canned form commonly used in cooking.

Therapeutic foods: organic soy milk, soy yogurt, and soy kefir

Touring Through the Detox Food Plan



Nuts & Seeds

The nuts and seeds category provides a variety of options for snack choices throughout the day. Nuts and seeds may also be sprinkled on top of salads, cereals, or vegetables.

There is compelling data that supports eating a handful of nuts each day to reduce chronic disease risk.^{71,72} While not required, it is recommended that at least 1 to 2 servings of nuts be eaten daily. Aim for a mixed blend of raw unsalted nuts.

Try adding ground flaxseeds to a salad or a smoothie, or use seed butters like tahini (sesame seed butter) drizzled over vegetables, almond butter with fresh fruit, or cashew “cream” in place of traditional cream-based sauces.

All nuts, seeds, and their respective butters or pastes are considered to be therapeutic for detoxification as they provide anti-inflammatory oils, quality protein, and phytonutrient compounds like lignans.^{73,74} Lignans, found in flaxseeds and sesame seeds, support detoxification and can also influence hormone metabolism.⁷⁵⁻⁷⁸

Therapeutic foods: all the nuts and seeds and their respective butters or pastes, especially flaxseeds and sesame seeds

Fats & Oils

A variety of fats and liquid oils can be used for salad dressings and cooking. Preferable choices are minimally refined, cold-pressed, organic, non-GMO fats and liquid oils whenever possible, as these are of the best quality. Fats and liquid oils break down in heat, light, and oxygen, so the quality and storage of these oils are important. Keep oils in dark glass (not plastic) containers and discard them if they smell rancid. There are no specific recommended servings of these oils during a detoxification plan.

Fats and oils from avocados, flaxseeds, hempseeds, olives, pumpkin seeds, rice bran, and sesame seeds are therapeutic for detoxification for different reasons. Monounsaturated fats, such as found in avocados (including its oil) and olives (as well as extra-virgin olive oil), have been linked with liver health.⁷⁹ Avocados also contain dietary fiber, which supports digestive regularity.

Flaxseed oil and hempseed oil are both plant-based sources of anti-inflammatory omega-3 fats.⁸⁰ Pumpkin seed oil, rice bran oil, and sesame oil have also been shown to be anti-inflammatory and supportive of liver health.⁸¹

Therapeutic foods: avocado (fruit and oil), extra-virgin olive oil, flaxseed oil, hempseed oil, pumpkin seed oil, rice bran oil, and sesame oil



Touring Through the Detox Food Plan



Non-Starchy Vegetables

The greatest variety of foods for detoxification is found in the non-starchy vegetables category. The goal is to consume at least nine servings every day to support liver detoxification and the elimination of toxins from the gut.

The non-starchy vegetables are divided into categories on the Detox Food Plan: cruciferous vegetables, leafy greens, alliums, and other non-starchy vegetables. Eat foods from each category daily to get as much variety as possible.

Cruciferous vegetables are of special importance in this food plan, as these powerful vegetables support several aspects of detoxification.^{28,82} Cruciferous vegetables include arugula, bok choy, broccoli, broccolini, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, Chinese cabbage (napa), cauliflower, collard greens, horseradish, kale, kohlrabi, mustard greens, radishes, rutabaga, turnips, wasabi, and watercress.

Cruciferous vegetables contain phytonutrients called glucosinolates. When cruciferous vegetables are chopped or chewed, the glucosinolates turn into active compounds called isothiocyanates (examples of these include indole-3-carbinol and sulforaphane). These activated compounds support the body's natural detoxification systems.⁸³ In research studies, cruciferous vegetables have been associated with reduced risk of certain cancers.^{84,85} If you were to take only one step toward following this food plan to better support detoxification, eating more cruciferous vegetables would be an excellent start.

Leafy greens include a number of nutritious vegetables that can be used in stir-fries, salads, or smoothies. One family of phytonutrients in leafy green vegetables is called carotenoids. In research, eating more of these phytonutrients has been associated with liver health and brain health.^{86,87} In one observational study of older adults, eating 1-2 servings of leafy green vegetables daily was equivalent to the brain being 11 years younger compared to rarely eating leafy vegetables.⁸⁸ Rather than a single nutrient being responsible for these powerful benefits, it is thought that the nutrients in green leafy vegetables work together to support health. This is one reason why eating whole, unprocessed plant foods is so important for your overall well-being.

Allium vegetables, including onion, shallots, and garlic provide sulfur nutrients to support liver detoxification.^{89,90} In research studies, allium vegetables have been associated with reduced risk of certain cancers.^{91,92}



Finally, the **Other Non-starchy Vegetables** section provides fiber and foundational nutrition. This category includes vegetables like artichokes, asparagus, beets, carrots, peppers, zucchini, and many others. Some of these vegetables also provide therapeutic benefits for detoxification. For example, artichokes and beets have been linked with supporting liver health.⁹³⁻⁹⁶

Due to the diverse benefits of colorful non-starchy vegetables, it is important to eat a variety of them daily. The best way to eat lots of vegetables is to include them at every meal. For example, eat leftover broccoli or stir-fried vegetables with

Touring Through the Detox Food Plan

a morning meal, and then enjoy a hearty vegetable soup or a vegetable salad for lunch. Finish the day's meals with a side salad and cooked vegetables at dinner.

Therapeutic foods: cruciferous vegetables, leafy greens, and allium vegetables

Starchy Vegetables

Starchy vegetables are also included in the Detox Food Plan, as these vegetables contain fiber and phytonutrients to support health. Like the leafy green vegetables, several starchy orange vegetables (such as pumpkin, squash, and sweet potatoes) contain carotenoids. Eating this phytonutrient family has been associated with liver health.⁸⁶ It is best to eat starchy vegetables with protein and/or fat to help prevent blood sugar spikes that can happen when eating a starchy vegetable alone.

Fruits

Phytonutrient-dense fruits can be helpful for detoxification because of the antioxidants they offer.² They are a great choice for a simple snack or to satisfy a desire for something sweet. It is typically better to eat fruit with a small amount of protein and/or fat (such as nuts) to help offset any potential blood sugar spikes.

Vitamin C, an antioxidant in fresh fruits (as well as raw vegetables), supports detoxification and helps protect the cells of the body.⁹⁷ Preliminary research suggests that some phytonutrients in citrus fruits, in particular, may support detoxification.⁹⁸ Be mindful that you may need to avoid grapefruit if you are taking certain medications. Certain compounds in grapefruit can interfere with the way some medications work in the body.⁹⁹

Therapeutic foods: citrus fruits (such as grapefruit, oranges, and mandarins)

Grains

As with dairy, gluten is not included in this food plan, but you can eat gluten-free (GF) whole grains. Whole grains have an intact outer skin (bran) and are generally a good source of dietary fiber. When purchasing oats, be especially careful to choose "certified gluten-free" products to avoid oats contaminated with gluten.

Amaranth, buckwheat, millet, certified gluten-free oats, quinoa, and teff are healthy gluten-free choices that provide fiber to promote digestive regularity. That supports the elimination of toxins in your stool.¹² Gluten-containing grains should be avoided unless your functional medicine practitioner says you can eat them.

Beverages

Hydration supports regular bowel movements and metabolism.^{49,100} Drinking water throughout the day has also been linked to positive effects on mood, energy, and brain function.¹⁰¹⁻¹⁰⁴ It is important to drink plenty of clean, filtered water to support your body's ability to detoxify, too.¹⁰⁵ Individual recommendations for water intake depend upon several factors, including body weight.¹⁰⁶



Touring Through the Detox Food Plan

In addition to filtered water, low-sodium broths (bone, vegetable), meat stocks, and other decaffeinated beverages like fresh, raw, cold-pressed vegetable juices are also good choices. Teas (black, green, herbal, etc.) are also recommended on the Detox Food Plan due to their associated anti-inflammatory properties.¹⁰⁷ Green tea is highlighted as a therapeutic food on this plan because it contains phytonutrients called catechins, which have been linked with liver health benefits.^{108,109}

Alcohol is omitted on this plan, as it is a well-known toxin to the liver.¹¹⁰ Avoiding alcohol on this food plan helps support the liver's natural detoxification processes.

Therapeutic foods: green tea

Condiments

Most condiments available on store shelves are not permitted on the Detox Food Plan, as they contain added sweeteners and preservatives. However, homemade versions of many condiments—including mayonnaise, ketchup, and barbecue sauce—can be easily made with only a few approved ingredients.

Store-bought mustard (Dijon, stone-ground, etc.) made without added sugars is permitted, as is vinegar (raw apple cider vinegar, balsamic vinegar, white, etc.). Coconut aminos, fresh lemon and lime juice, miso, and tamari are also allowed.

Herbs and Spices

All herbs and spices are included in the Detox Food Plan and provide a variety of health-promoting compounds. For example, turmeric, garlic, and cardamom are anti-inflammatory and may support liver function.¹¹¹⁻¹¹⁴ Parsley and cilantro (coriander leaves) are rich in antioxidants and other phytonutrients.^{115,116}

Therapeutic foods: all herbs and spices



Frequently Asked Questions

Is food packaging important?

Food packaging is an essential aspect to consider in a detox program. Many foods are packaged in cans, cellophane, foil, boxes, cardboard, metal, and plastic, all of which can impart chemicals to what we eat and drink. Aim for whole foods with minimal packaging or in higher-quality materials (such as non-BPA lined cans). Be especially careful to keep plastic water bottles out of the heat, as high temperatures promote leaching of bisphenol A (BPA) into the water.¹¹⁷

Is buying organic food worth the money?

Minimizing exposure to pesticides and GMOs is a top reason to buy organically grown food, especially when it comes to animal-based foods.³⁷ Although they may be more expensive, the health effects from these toxins can be far more costly. Buy foods in season and from local farmers to help keep the costs down. Making purchase decisions according to the annual Dirty Dozen and Clean 15 lists from the [Environmental Working Group](#) can also help you make informed and cost-effective grocery purchases.

Are there genetic tests for detoxification?

Yes, but a genetic test is not required to follow the Detox Food Plan. General food and lifestyle strategies can support detoxification processes in the body. Depending on your personal and family health history, tests for genetic variations in detoxification enzymes are potentially a worthwhile investment. These tests only need to be done once, and they can help direct your functional medicine practitioner in personalizing the Detox Food Plan.

Is fasting beneficial for detox?

When it comes to detox, many forms of fasting have emerged—juice or liquid fasting, intermittent fasting, caloric restriction, and many others. Each person should discuss this topic with their functional medicine practitioner to see whether fasting in any form would be helpful. As protein is key for healthy detoxification, most functional medicine practitioners will continue to include quality protein during a break from ingesting food.²⁹

Does limiting calories help detox?

Detoxification requires energy. Calories are needed to fuel the pathways to move toxins through your system.²⁹ So, this food plan is not limited in calories. A specific calorie level may be recommended if other aspects of your health are being addressed (such as high blood sugar or weight loss). Your functional medicine provider may recommend nutritional supplements or powders to help support and balance the organs of elimination and detoxification if this cannot be achieved with food alone.

Frequently Asked Questions

What sweeteners can I use on the Detox Food Plan?

Ideally, it is best to limit your intake of added sugars as they tend to create more inflammation, which may make it more difficult for the body to effectively clear toxins.^{118,119} Small amounts of brown rice syrup, stevia, honey, maple syrup, fruit concentrates, and ripe fruit can be used.

Can I eat bread?

Bread is not included in the Detox Food Plan. However, it would be acceptable to make bread from gluten-free flours (especially legume flours) with added protein (such as egg white, nut meal, flaxseeds, or sesame seeds) and fiber (such as from whole grains like brown rice) as part of the Detox Food Plan. Gluten-containing grains should only be included as permitted by your functional medicine provider.

What does an ideal detox meal look like?

An example of an ideal detox meal is a small bowl of miso soup as the appetizer. Next, the entrée would be half a plate of steamed leafy greens and cruciferous vegetables alongside a serving of protein, such as wild-caught salmon lightly pan-fried in sesame oil with crushed garlic and minced ginger. A small serving of a protein-containing grain like quinoa could accompany the meal. Lastly, an orange with a cup of green tea would serve as a dessert.

Is there a certain way to cook cruciferous vegetables?

Raw cruciferous vegetables are highest in phytonutrients to support detoxification. However, raw vegetables are difficult for some people to digest.¹²⁰ Steaming cruciferous vegetables like broccoli for about 90 seconds (to the point they become bright green) supports digestion yet does not cook the vegetables to the point where important plant compounds are destroyed.^{121,122}

Can I eat frozen vegetables (and fruit)?

Both fresh and frozen vegetables are top choices. However, canned vegetables are only advised on the Detox Food Plan if the can is not lined with plastic or is labeled BPA-free. To reduce costs and increase variety, choose vegetables in season whenever possible. For example, try a cabbage salad in the winter when highly nutritious cabbage is abundant.

Frequently Asked Questions

How much fish should be eaten per week?

Here are some general guidelines for fish consumption to help minimize mercury exposure from seafood:⁵⁹

- Do not eat shark, swordfish, king mackerel, or tilefish because they contain high levels of mercury.
- Eat up to 12 ounces a week of a variety of fish that are lower in mercury.
- Some of the most commonly eaten fish that are low in mercury are cod, sardines, salmon, pollock, and catfish.
- Another commonly eaten fish, albacore ("white") tuna has more mercury than canned light tuna. Eat up to 6 ounces of albacore tuna per week.
- Check local advisories about the safety of fish caught by family and friends in local lakes, rivers, and coastal areas. If no advice is available, eat up to 6 ounces per week of fish caught from local waters, but don't consume any other fish during that week.

How can vegans allergic to soy get quality protein?

As previously mentioned, protein is an essential component of detoxification processes. If you don't eat animal protein and don't eat soy protein for personal or health reasons, you can choose other legumes, as well as nuts and seeds, as a source of amino acids to support detoxification.

Why is canola oil on the food list?

Canola oil contains beneficial anti-inflammatory omega-3 fats.¹²³ You may be concerned about canola oil because it is commonly genetically modified. However, the organic form is non-GMO.

Why isn't this a low-allergy food plan?

Two of the top sources of food allergies and intolerances—gluten and dairy—have been omitted from this food plan.¹²⁴ Most people will complete an elimination diet to help determine food sensitivities and intolerances before transitioning into this longer-term Detox Food Plan. This food plan can be tailored to meet any needs related to foods you need to avoid.

What is bisphenol A (BPA)?

BPA is a chemical used in plastics, such as plastic food storage and disposable food containers. Environmental toxins like BPA can interfere with the body's hormone receptors.¹²⁵ To reduce your exposure to these hormone-disrupting substances: limit how many packaged foods you eat, avoid plastic food containers and water bottles as much as possible, and never microwave foods in plastic.

Resources and Tools for Success

The Detox Food Plan is intended as a long-term approach to support the body in processing toxins. It works best when personalized for you. To help you follow this food plan, several other tools have been created.

The following handouts are available from your functional medicine practitioner to support you with the Detox Food Plan:

- [Detox Food Plan \(food list\)](#)
- [Detox Food Plan – Weekly Planner and Recipes](#)
- [Diet, Nutrition, and Lifestyle Journal – 1 Day, 3 Day, 7 Day](#)
- [Phytonutrient Spectrum Foods](#)
- [Phytonutrient Spectrum Comprehensive Guide](#)

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