

Spring Cleansing : Making It Personal

by June Kaminski, MSN PhD(c), 2001

Spring is becoming a reality in many parts of the Northern Hemisphere - a time of rebirth, renewal and spring cleaning. By all means, spruce up your environment, your home, your wardrobe. But don't forget your most intimate environment of all - your body. In many cultures, through many ages, spring cleansing has become a fact of life.

Its the time of year to shed any congestion, built-up toxins and give your digestion, liver and energy level a good boost and cleaning. During the winter we tend to eat a more acidic diet, such as high protein foods which can cause the intestines to secrete a heavy mucous coating. This means the intestine is not able to absorb nutrients as well. Too much acidic food also cause the intestines to harbor harmful bacteria. These two problems can lead to constipation and autointoxication. This causes the intestines to re-absorb toxic materials back into the blood stream.

This also causes strain on the liver which eventually can't keep up with the blood needing detoxification. When the body is overburdened with toxins, the liver may be stressed causing symptoms such as allergies, headaches, nausea, irritability, foggy thinking, muscle tension, skin eruptions, itching and fatigue. In women, PMS, fibroid tumors, and endometriosis are signs of liver stress, since the liver must process excess estrogens out of the bloodstream. This is where spring cleansing fits in. You can give your intestines and liver a break by helping them get rid of the built-up toxins.



There are many different ways to engage in spring body cleansing. This week we will address a few of the most common ones. Give them a try, if you're so inclined. You'll likely feel more energetic, lighter, with less aches and digestion troubles. Don't go off on any tangents though - tonics and cleansing diets are great, but don't let them impede your ingestion of the necessary nutrients your body needs for day to day repair and maintenance. These suggestions are meant to supplement your normal healthy daily diet, not substitute for them.

Dr Elson Haas suggests using the Master Cleanser method of internal body cleansing. This includes the doctor's recipe:

The Master Cleanser

2 Tablespoons of fresh lemon (or lime) juice
1 Tablespoon pure maple syrup
1/10 teaspoon cayenne pepper
8 ounces of spring water

Read more about the Cleanser at http://www.elsonhaas.com/articles/article_05.html

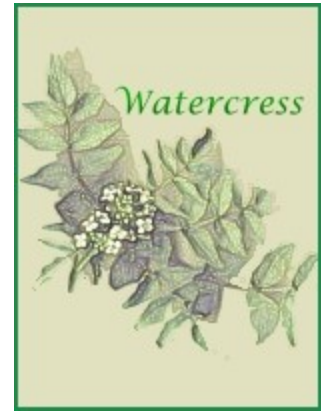
Dine on Spring Morsels

Several wild and natural foods are wonderful spring tonics. Try one or more of the following. If prepared right, they are delicious and oh, so nutritious, full of enzymes, minerals and other nutrients, as well as having cleansing properties.

1. Dandelion leaves
2. Sorrel

3. Nettles
4. Yellow dock
5. Red Beet
6. Watercress are all wonderful tonics for the liver, bringing renewed strength and vitality to the body.

7. Barberry
8. Milk Thistle
9. Red Clover
10. Burdock are herbs that are excellent for cleansing the liver and gall bladder, which boost the digestive and immune systems.



Herbs for Intestinal Cleansing

Two herbs Psyllium and Cascara Sagrada are wonderful cleansers for the intestines and colon. Psyllium (*Plantago ovata* seed and husk) is a bulk natural laxative -- its mucilaginous action cleanses the intestines. Psyllium also reduces low density lipoproteins ("bad" cholesterol) and normalizes blood sugar levels. Cascara Sagrada (*Rhamnus purshiana* bark) stimulates the intestinal lining and relieve a sluggish colon. The combination of both Psyllium (as a bulking agent) and Cascara (as a stimulant laxative) is a wonderful colon cleanser.

Chinese Spring Medicine

In Chinese medicine, spring is the season of the wood element, corresponding to the liver and gall bladder. The liver governs the smooth flow of energy in the body and for cleansing and storing the blood. Gall bladder problems frequently show up in the spring, often brought on by fatty foods such as dairy (especially cheese), fried foods and red meat or pork. Indigestion or nausea following eating, pain under the right rib cage toward the stomach, or radiating pain between the shoulder blades are all signs of a stressed gall bladder.



In spring, the body moves into a cycle of rebuilding and cleansing various organs and systems. Just as sap rises in the trees, our bodies need to move upward. We need to cleanse the past toxins from our bodies and minds and rebuild. In doing so, we move beyond "the trunk of the tree". The organs rebuilding and cleansing in spring are ones located high up in the body. During the season of the Wood element, energy is focused on the liver and gall bladder. March 11 through May 22 is the Wood Element Season. Later, the Fire element season begins during the last month of spring and the energy moves on to the heart and small intestines, including the circulatory and endocrine systems.

For extensive further reading on Chinese spring cleansers and health boosters, visit Julia Chang's site at <http://www.sensiblehealth.com/>

Now is the time of year to focus on YOUR state of health and well being. If you're like most of us, it's time for some inner cleansing. Combine the use of fresh spring greens with the herbs mentioned as well as plenty of water, exercise, fresh air, steam baths and skin toning to help your body purify itself and prepare for the warm summer months ahead. You'll only feel better for it - full of renewed energy and strength, ready for healthy energetic frolics and warm weather fun.