



SPRING DETOX

Spring is a great time to think detoxification, so let's give that liver of yours a break. *By Elizabeth Montgomery*



Springtime has arrived. Now is the time when the earth is bursting to life with new growth and ever increasing daylight hours. But did you know that the expansive energy of early spring makes it the ideal time to detoxify?

Everyone should now be thinking about spring detoxification, which starts, and ends, with a healthy liver. This remarkable and complex organ plays an important role in metabolism. One of its most important metabolic functions is the detoxification of toxic chemicals, drugs and hormones, both those that are made in the body and those that come from external sources. The liver inactivates these substances and sends them onto biochemical, or physiological pathways that lead to excretion via the bowel, kidneys, lungs or skin. It is also a major blood reservoir, filtering out toxins at the rate of approximately 1.5 litres of blood every minute.

Another important function of the liver is to produce bile (a yellow alkaline fluid), anywhere from 440-800 ml daily. Without bile, most food would remain undigested or only partially digested. It's required in the breakdown of fats, and helps to regulate levels of beneficial micro flora. Moreover, it's crucial for the peristaltic, or muscle action, that assists in the removal of food waste passing through the colon - which helps to prevent constipation.

According to Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), the spring seasonal cycle corresponds with the wood element which governs the liver and gallbladder region of the body. TCM considers the liver to be the organ most strongly affected by our emotional states. Conversely, it has long been recognised that when the liver is congested, then toxic emotions like anger become more likely to arise. Therefore, signs

of liver congestion may include physical and emotional symptoms such as headaches, nausea, vision disturbances, PMS, anger, irritability or jealousy.

There are many dietary and lifestyle factors that determine whether or not the liver is able to detoxify and produce adequate bile. For example, liver congestion can be the result of overeating, fried foods, stress, excess alcohol, or unprocessed emotional states. The good news is that the liver has amazing rejuvenating abilities, and continues to function when up to 80% of its cells are damaged. What's even more remarkable, the liver is able to regenerate its own damaged tissue.

10 key foods to support liver health and detoxification:

1. Lemons

Lemon contains a powerful phytonutrient called limonene which helps stimulate the liver detoxification pathways. It's especially beneficial when taken in the morning in a glass of water to assist the liver in its removal of toxins.

2. Garlic

Garlic has high amounts of allicin and selenium, two natural compounds that assist in liver cleansing. When taken raw, it has the ability to activate liver enzymes and help flush out toxins from the system.

3. Sour Foods

In Chinese medicine, the flavour sour is associated with the wood element and liver health. Sour foods such as raw sauerkraut, plums or dill pickles help to open up the liver detoxification pathways and prepare the digestive tract for food.

4. Green Vegetables

Green vegetables are high in plant chlorophylls which help to remove toxins from the blood stream. They also have the ability to neutralise heavy metals, chemicals and pesticides, offering powerful protection for the liver.

5. Artichokes

Artichokes are prized for two liver enhancing phytonutrients: cynarin and silymarin. Cynarin is an antioxidant which aids the liver in producing bile, and silymarin is a flavonoid that aids the protection of liver cells. Additionally, both of these help to regenerate the liver.

LOVE YOUR LIVER

Great lifestyle tips for your liver:

EARLY TO BED: this is important as the liver detoxifies between 1-3am

EAT CLEAN: choose natural and organic foods to reduce liver congestion

REDUCE STRESS: aim to incorporate calming practices into your daily routine like meditation or yoga

PROCESS EMOTIONS: to walk, talk or exercise out uncomfortable emotional states

LIMIT ENVIRONMENTAL TOXINS: reduce exposure to toxins by choosing natural household cleaning products

6. Turmeric

The curcuminoids in turmeric are antioxidant and anti-inflammatory. A key spice traditionally used to decongest the liver, and assist in bile production.

7. Avocado

Avocados are a rich source of glutathione (a type of antioxidant), which helps the liver to clear itself of harmful fats and environmental toxins.

8. Green tea

Green tea is rich in antioxidants known as catechins, a type of antioxidant that boosts liver function and helps reduce fat storage.

9. Beetroot and carrots

These two root vegetables are high in beta carotene and flavonoids. Grating these raw into salads can help to stimulate and improve overall liver function.

10. Walnuts

Walnuts are high in glutathione and omega 3 fatty acids, which support the liver during the cleansing process. ॐ

Elizabeth Montgomery is a London-based holistic nutritional therapist (holisticnutrition.co.uk)

THINGS TO AVOID

Fried foods
Excess alcohol
Damaged heated fats
Glutinous grains
Excess animal protein
Processed foods
Chronic stress
Household chemicals
Smoking
Artificial sweeteners
MSG
High fructose corn syrup
Cow's cheese