

# HEALTHY

BY TARA NOLAN

# holidays

## 5 tips to a safe mid-winter detox

**THE HOLIDAYS CAN BE** a magical time of year, full of family, revelry and good will. They can also be filled with temptation, overindulgence and stress—three factors that can leave you feeling sluggish and overweight come January.

Every New Year, we are bombarded with diet and weight-loss information, including a variety of ways to detoxify the body. While it might be tempting to make a blanket—or extreme—resolution to

get back on track, Lesley Stoyan, owner of Toronto-based health and wellness consulting business Daily Apple (dailyapple.ca), recommends small steps. “I usually tell people not to make resolutions because they are likely to fail,” she says. “Doing things in bite-sized bits is usually the key to success.”

With moderation in mind, here are some ways to safely detoxify your body and get back into a healthy routine.

### 1 MAKE ATTAINABLE GOALS

Rather than cutting everything out at once, Stoyan will tackle bad habits one by one. For example, if a client drinks a lot of coffee, she'll recommend reducing his or her caffeine intake. “If you're trying to break yourself of a habit, it takes at least three months for your body to adapt to that change,” she says.

While it may be tempting to go for a quick win with an extreme and restrictive diet, be warned that this can have a rebound effect. Most of us don't have the lifestyle to sustain an extremely limited approach to food, explains registered nutritionist and best-selling author Dr. Joey Shulman (drjoey.com). This means at some point you will have to come off the diet, which itself can have negative effects on your health.

As Stoyan explains, on an extreme detox you're not taking in enough calories to allow your body to function properly, you're denying your body necessary vitamins, minerals and other nutrients, and you're doing damage to your tissues. Your body starts to catabolize itself, eating its own muscle tissue and fat stores and lowering its metabolic rate. “The key to balance is to have a non-fluctuating lifestyle,” states Stoyan.



## 2

### START YOUR DAY RIGHT

The benefit of a balanced, healthy breakfast is not a myth. It will set the stage for your day. However, Dr. Shulman suggests that when it comes to detoxifying your body, one of the best game-changers is drinking hot water and the juice of half a lemon before you eat. “It's a natural astringent to the body, as well as cleansing and alkalizing,” she explains.

Stoyan takes it a step further by mixing lemon and water with two tablespoons of ground flax, a spoonful of greens supplement and a couple of drops of omega-3 fatty acid. This concoction, which she refers to as “nature's Metamucil,” provides the body with essential fatty acids (or EFAs) and the equivalent of a serving of fruit and vegetables, right off the bat. “It gets your system going before you have breakfast—the most important meal,” she says. “It gives you enough calories to keep your energy levels high, so you're not binge eating by the end of the day.”

## 3

### EAT FRESH, WHOLESOME, PURE FOODS

While you're gradually trying to cut out the hard stuff, like caffeine, try replacing processed foods on your grocery list with wholesome, fresh foods, including the requisite seven to 10 daily servings of fruit and vegetables. You should also avoid refined sugars and artificial sweeteners. “Try to eat the foods with as much energy as possible,” advises Stoyan. This means determining what's in season and buying locally when you can. While this may be a challenge in the winter, it means you'll be eating things like hearty stews with sweet potatoes and squash, or crisp apples. “When you're eating foods that work

with the season, your body gets more energy, which will help you get back to that balanced state much, much sooner,” she adds.

Surprisingly, this doesn't mean overlooking the frozen-food aisle. “You can get these great fruit blends that are frozen in the wintertime,” says Dr. Shulman. “Fresh is best, but frozen is a viable alternative,” she adds. Be sure to read the label to make certain there are no extra ingredients like sweeteners.

And now that you're eating all this wholesome food with lots of fibre, you need to make sure you're sufficiently hydrated, so keep drinking plenty of water.

### 4 BALANCE YOUR GOOD NUTRITION HABITS WITH EXERCISE

Because we're so busy over the holidays, most of us fall off the exercise wagon. Getting back into it can be tough, but Stoyan says a tag team of proper nutrition and exercise is the best way to get back on track. “Sweating is nature's detoxifier,” she says. Brave the cold and get outside to do your exercise, she recommends, as the fresh air, sunshine and vitamin D can really help get the body back to a state of balance where your immune system is functioning properly. It also gets everything in the body moving, from your circulation to your lymphatic system to your bowel and bladder functions.

### MOOD-BOOSTING FOODS

The winter blahs can affect all areas of our health, but there are foods that can boost our mood. “Omega-3s are number one for that,” says Dr. Shulman, who recommends supplementing with a liquid fish oil. You can also get your omega-3s through a variety of food sources, including fish, like salmon and sardines, nuts, seeds and flax oil. These EFAs have been known to help with mild-to-moderate depression.

To satisfy a sweet tooth, Dr. Shulman recommends blending blueberries, cranberries, raspberries and strawberries into a smoothie, or freezing red grapes so you can

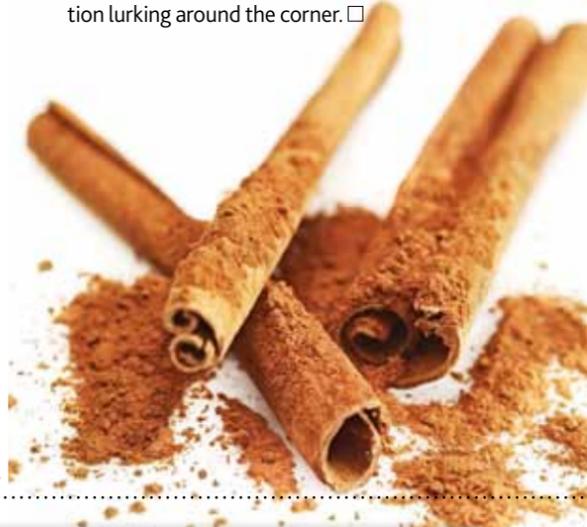
grab a couple at night if you're hungry after dinner. Dark chocolate is also a good treat—just be sure to watch your portion size.

This time of year tends to make us feel sleepy, so Stoyan recommends stocking up on energy-boosting foods—proteins, fruits and vegetables—at lunchtime and saving the “warm, fuzzy foods,” like a serving of pasta or rice, for dinner, when you are settling into a cozy night at home. Eating these foods at lunch will just make you crave a nap at work, which, unless you're George Costanza, might not be the best idea.

### 5 DON'T DENY YOURSELF THE OCCASIONAL TREAT

After the holidays, you may have decided to cut out alcohol, caffeine and junk foods, but that doesn't mean you're in for a bland winter menu. There are lots of healthy ways to jazz up a vegetable dish or make your fish more interesting. “Spices and seasonings are my favourite things, and there are so many health properties to spices,” says Stoyan, who recommends adding chili flakes or powder to meals—not only for flavour, but for their anti-carcinogenic, anti-parasitic, anti-viral and immune-building properties. Cinnamon is another antioxidant-rich superfood that helps balance blood sugars and gives a bland snack a little kick. Dr. Shulman recommends sprinkling it over half a cup of whole-grain cereal or into a glass of milk (preferably skim).

Allow yourself some treats, says Dr. Shulman, like a glass of red wine or some dark chocolate. Allowing for the odd indulgence will help you to remain positive—and perhaps help you deal with the next special-occasion temptation lurking around the corner. □



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