

COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE

# Detox Food Plan

*Nutritional support for the body's natural detoxification*



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## What Is Detox?

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In functional medicine, “detox” refers to **metabolic detoxification**—the body’s process of making chemicals, compounds, hormones, and toxins less harmful. The liver, kidneys, large intestine, lymphatic system, and sweat glands work together to process and remove toxins.

This is an ongoing, daily process. Toxins enter from air pollution, plastics, heavy metals, and especially pesticides, herbicides, and fertilizers used in agriculture—through water, food, air, and our home and work environments. Construction materials, carpet chemicals, paint, household cleaners, dental restorations, and personal care products all add to the body’s toxic load.

The amount of toxins in a person’s body reflects three factors: individual exposure, genetic differences in detoxification enzymes, and eating patterns that either support or hinder elimination. Symptoms may appear when a person reaches their personal limit of accumulated toxins. Researchers increasingly link toxic buildup to obesity, type 2 diabetes, metabolic syndrome, infertility, allergies, mood and neurological conditions, and more.

### QUICK TIP

*Scientists estimate the average adult has at least 300 toxins in their body, and a newborn may have over 200.*

Fatigue is one of the most common reasons a detox program is recommended, along with overall poor health, weight-loss resistance, or symptoms associated with toxicity. The goal of a detoxification food plan is to provide nutritional support to help the body process and eliminate toxins, improving symptoms and overall wellbeing.

## Food and Detox

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Food plays a role in all phases of detoxification. The first step is to identify the toxins entering your body from food, beverages, and the environment—and to avoid them whenever possible.

Various nutrients fuel the detoxification process; a shortage of any one could mean an increased toxic burden. The liver has two phases of detoxification, Phase I and Phase II. **Cruciferous vegetables** are highly recommended because they support both phases, and high-quality lean protein is needed for Phase II. Once the liver transforms toxins, they are eliminated through urine, stool, and sweat.

### Food Plays a Role in All Phases

Think of it as a flow: toxins come *in* → food provides *Phase I protection and support* → food provides *Phase II support* → toxins go *out*. Food is the input that powers every step of this pathway.

While the Detox Food Plan reduces common food triggers like gluten and dairy, its real focus is long-term nutritional support of the major systems involved in detoxification—especially the digestive system and the liver. It emphasizes eating healthy, colorful foods for life, reducing plastic use, and choosing organic when possible.

The digestive system needs to work efficiently to provide one to two healthy, well-formed bowel movements daily; without them, toxin elimination is hindered. Proper hydration and at least 35 grams of fiber daily both support elimination. More than any other plan, the Detox Food Plan is designed to support the liver.

# Features of the Detox Food Plan

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## Reduces food triggers

The plan reduces exposure to trigger foods connected to health concerns. Food reactions—allergies (immediate), sensitivities (delayed by hours or days), and intolerances (missing an enzyme)—are frequently overlooked contributors to chronic issues. Removing reactive foods allows the gut to heal while supporting detoxification pathways. After a period, your practitioner may guide a personalized reintroduction; the goal is to expand variety, not to maintain a restrictive diet long-term.

## Supports liver function

Protein is a key nutrient that enables the liver to process toxins. Specific amino acids are required to process certain toxins, so high-quality protein is an essential cornerstone of efficient detoxification.

## Encourages organic & reduces toxic burden

The plan emphasizes organically grown, non-GMO foods; lean grass-fed meats or wild-caught fish; minimally refined, cold-pressed oils; and reduced exposure to plastic-contained foods. Start by removing toxins from your diet and home environment as much as possible.

## Tips for minimizing harmful substances

- Choose lean meats over fatty animal foods—pesticides concentrate in fat.
- Buy organically grown animal products (meats and dairy).
- Peel or remove outer leaves of some produce; cut away damaged areas.
- Wash produce before peeling so contaminants aren't transferred by the knife.
- Consult the EWG's "Dirty Dozen" and "Clean 15" lists.
- Avoid preservatives (BHT, BHA, benzoate, sulfites), artificial colors, and sweeteners.
- Limit canned foods and plastic containers (BPA); cook with stainless steel or cast iron.
- Use filtered water for drinking and cooking.

## More Features

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### **Provides targeted antioxidants**

Antioxidants from vegetables, fruits, legumes, nuts, seeds, herbs, and spices help protect cells from damage and support natural detoxification.

### **Supports nutrient-dependent pathways**

The plan includes nutrients that support detoxification in the digestive tract, liver, and kidneys. Phytonutrients in plant foods protect cells from toxins and reduce inflammation, and a plant-rich diet supports kidney health.

### **Encourages healthy elimination**

Toxins are removed through urine and stool. High-fiber foods and adequate water ensure healthy removal.

### **Balances hormone metabolism**

Whole foods support the liver and gut to help achieve proper hormone balance. Environmental toxins can disrupt hormones; whole foods that improve detoxification may, in turn, improve hormonal balance. Sex hormones such as estrogen pass through the same liver pathways as toxins before being removed.

## Touring Through the Food Plan

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The Detox food list is a snapshot of foods to select from each day. Your provider may personalize it with a calorie target or guidance on timing. Try to select the **therapeutic foods** within each group to get the most benefit.

### Protein

Protein is essential—amino acids bind to toxins in the liver and support their removal. Include some protein in every meal. Omega-3-rich fish are highlighted for their anti-inflammatory fats; choose wild-caught, as farmed varieties may contain PCBs. Shellfish are omitted, as they are often contaminated. Soy foods are also therapeutic—**isoflavones** influence liver detoxification.

**Therapeutic foods:** fish and soy.

### Legumes

An affordable source of quality protein and fiber, both of which aid detox in the liver and gut. Aim for at least one serving daily. Black soybeans and edamame are highlighted for their protein, fiber, and isoflavone content.

**Therapeutic foods:** black soybeans and edamame.

### Dairy Alternatives

Dairy is not listed, as most commercial dairy contains toxins and hormones and is a common trigger food. Choose organic, unsweetened nut and grain milks. (Coconut milk here refers to the boxed variety.)

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

## Touring (continued)

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### Nuts & Seeds

A handful of nuts daily may reduce chronic disease risk; aim for 1–2 servings of raw, unsalted nuts. All nuts, seeds, and their butters are therapeutic, providing anti-inflammatory oils, protein, and lignans. Lignans (in flax and sesame) support detoxification and influence hormone metabolism.

**Therapeutic foods:** all nuts and seeds, especially flaxseeds and sesame seeds.

### Fats & Oils

Choose minimally refined, cold-pressed, organic oils. Store in dark glass and discard if rancid. Monounsaturated fats from avocados and olives support liver health; flaxseed and hempseed oils provide omega-3s; pumpkin seed, rice bran, and sesame oils are anti-inflammatory.

### Non-Starchy Vegetables

The greatest variety for detoxification—aim for at least 9 servings daily, drawing from four groups:

- **Cruciferous** (arugula, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, kale, radishes, turnips, watercress): contain glucosinolates that become detoxifying isothiocyanates when chopped or chewed.
- **Leafy greens:** carotenoids associated with better liver and brain health.
- **Alliums** (onion, shallots, garlic): sulfur nutrients that enhance liver detoxification.
- **Other non-starchy vegetables:** fiber and foundational nutrition—eat a variety of colors daily.

**Therapeutic foods:** cruciferous vegetables, leafy greens, and alliums.

## Touring (continued)

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### Starchy Vegetables & Fruits

Starchy vegetables provide fiber and phytonutrients; orange varieties (pumpkin, squash, carrots, sweet potatoes) contain carotenoids linked to liver health. Pair with protein or fat to prevent blood sugar spikes. Phytonutrient-dense fruits offer antioxidant protection—eat with a little protein to offset spikes. Citrus may be especially beneficial, though grapefruit can interfere with certain medications.

**Therapeutic foods:** citrus fruits (grapefruit, mandarins, oranges, tangerines).

### Grains

Gluten is not included. Certified gluten-free whole grains—amaranth, buckwheat, millet, GF oats, quinoa, teff—provide fiber for regularity and detoxification.

### Beverages

Drink plenty of filtered water throughout the day. Low-sodium broths, stocks, and fresh vegetable juices are good choices. All teas are recommended for their anti-inflammatory effects; green tea is therapeutic for its catechins. Alcohol is omitted, as it is a known liver toxin.

**Therapeutic foods:** green tea.

### Condiments, Herbs & Spices

Most store-bought condiments aren't permitted (added sweeteners, preservatives), but homemade versions and sugar-free mustards, vinegars, coconut aminos, lemon/lime juice, miso, and tamari are fine. All herbs and spices are included—turmeric, garlic, and cardamom are especially supportive of the liver.

**Therapeutic foods:** all herbs and spices.

## Frequently Asked Questions

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### **Is food packaging important?**

Yes. Cans, cellophane, foil, and plastic can impart chemicals to food and drink. Choose whole foods with minimal packaging or higher-quality materials (non-BPA-lined cans), and keep plastic water bottles out of the heat.

### **Is “buying organic” worth the money?**

Minimizing exposure to pesticides, herbicides, and GMOs is the reason to buy organic, especially for animal-based foods. Buy in season and locally to reduce cost, and use the EWG’s annual “Dirty Dozen” and “Clean 15” lists.

### **Are there genetic tests for detoxification?**

Yes, though not required. Tests for genetic variations in detoxification enzymes only need to be done once and can help your practitioner personalize the plan, depending on your health history.

### **Is fasting beneficial for detox?**

Many forms have been tried. Discuss with your practitioner whether fasting would help you. Since protein is key for healthy detoxification, most providers continue to include quality protein during any break from food.

### **Does limiting calories help detox?**

Detoxification requires energy—calories fuel the pathways that move toxins through the system. This plan is not calorie-limited, though a specific level may be recommended if other health aspects are being addressed.

## FAQs (continued)

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### What sweeteners can I use?

Best to limit added sugars, which create inflammation. Modest amounts of brown rice syrup, stevia, honey, maple syrup, fruit concentrates, and ripe fruit can be used.

### Can I eat bread?

Bread isn't on the food list, but bread made from gluten-free flours (especially legume flours) with added protein and fiber is acceptable. Gluten-containing grains only as permitted by your provider.

### What does an ideal detox meal look like?

A small bowl of miso soup to start; an entrée of half a plate of steamed leafy greens and cruciferous vegetables with a serving of protein (such as wild salmon pan-fried in sesame oil with garlic and ginger); a small serving of quinoa; and an orange with green tea for dessert.

### Is there a certain way to cook cruciferous vegetables?

Raw cruciferous vegetables have the most detoxifying phytonutrients but can be hard to digest. Steaming for about 90 seconds—until bright green—is best for digestion without destroying the beneficial compounds.

### Can I eat frozen vegetables and fruit?

Yes—both fresh and frozen are recommended. Canned vegetables are not advised unless BPA-free. Choose seasonal produce to reduce cost and increase variety.

#### QUICK TIP

*This guide is for general education and does not replace individualized medical advice. Work with your provider to tailor the plan to your needs.*