

Natural High

From boosting your yoga practice to recovering after Burning Man, experts weigh in on the best tips for staying healthy through seasonal change

BY ALISON CLARE STEINGOLD


As summer draws to a close, the yang time of year begins its slow wane to winter. Those Labor Day BBQs and Champagne picnics of summer insouciance soon dissolve into workday concerns and chilly, dreary weather. Are you Starbuxing yourself with sugar-packed frappa-whatevers and no-doz dosages of caffeine to make it through the back-to-work/school shock? Are you already reaching for the office stash at choc-o'clock?

Seinfeld might observe in half-joke sarcasm, "Not that there's anything wrong with that." But through the lens of natural healing, the vices of our 24-hour world — barraging like an MSNBC tickertape — can be just as toxic as any product stamped with skull-and-crossbones. And this time of year, we're particularly susceptible to immune deficiency and imbalance. "Now's the time to start — before the cold and flu season kicks in," says Pacific Northwest-based Tierney Salter of Seattle's *The Herbalist* (theherbalist.com). "Changing your diet and perhaps a one- or two-week cleanse to keep the body tuned up? Way better than getting sick."

The wisdom of gentle cleansing and detoxification isn't just reserved for the rainy city that Starbucks built. In the Bay Area, licensed naturopath Dr. Cory's two-week Essential Cleanse classes are perpetually packed with both locals and out-of-towners taking advantage of her teleconferencing option (dr Cory.com). And her seasonal cleanse teas are a secret weapon of the Shamanic Cheerleaders (of which she's the newest member).

Bump into Dr. Cory at this month's Burning Man festival in the arid Nevada desert, and you'll find her decked out in a monogrammed lab coat inlaid with funky zebra stripes, handing out complimentary nasal swabs to soothe dry, chapped nostrils (a must-have, as it turns out, for these sand-swept revelers). Her Party Pax — pocket-sized envelopes filled with holistic energy formulas for Playa players who over-indulge — are a yearly sell-out.

Dr. Cory's Essential Cleanse involves not only a hypoallergenic or "anti-inflammatory" diet and custom mix of natural medicines, but also education. Using the experience as a touchstone, patients learn to eat foods that work for



When the seasons change, Bay Area naturopath Dr. Cory favors gentle cleanses



them, all the while editing out the rest.

"Radical approaches stimulate the liver and colon with extremes: Just juicing. Just water," explains Dr. Cory. "For many, that's too extreme." She recommends clients detoxify by supplementing the minerals and amino acids that get depleted by our high-sugar, high-stress world of modern living. Among her medicine chest favorites to enhance toxin excretion: N-acetyl cysteine, glutamine, green tea and glycine.

Back in Seattle, Salter, too, looks to liver and kidney supportive blends. "The liver has extra work to do whether you're on antidepressants or adapting to seasons. It helps to filter toxins, so tonifying herbs — for us, things found locally, such as Oregon grapes, dandelion greens, burdock root, milk thistle, schizandra — can give a daily boost."

Both Dr. Cory and Salter divide herbal medicine between the tonifying (day-to-day supplements) and the therapeutic (for acute illness or conditions). Nancy Deville, best-selling health writer and author of *Death By Supermarket: The Fattening, Dumbing Down, and Poisoning of America* (Barricade Books; August, 2007), describes the process of detox in likeminded fashion, agreeing that it be incorporated as a mindful lifestyle, not just a onetime "slam dunk" to our systems. "How you age is determined by how toxic your lifestyle is," she notes. "So stop eating factory-produced food, [and start] toward what I call 'historic' food — organic real food that can, in theory, be picked, hunted or gathered." It is the reliance, she says, on media-blitzed practices such as extreme fasting, stimulants and pills that increases risks of accelerated aging.

From shopping only the perishable periphery of the market, as Deville offers, to Dr. Cory's suggestion of looking twice even at picnic tables (the weathered wood can house harmful arsenic), small changes can result in

eventual habit transformation. "People can make big changes and not realize [the holistic perspective]," says Dr. Cory, of a recent grocery fieldtrip with a group of Marin County-ians. "While they're interested in the organic and gluten-free kid's food, when I ask them what they clean their house with, it's 409. Chemicals. Toxic stuff."

But no matter whether you're home-culturing kombucha or have never even heard of goji

berries, whether burned out in Black Rock City or simply looking for an ayurvedic boost, when autumn's song begins to sing, get thee to nature and let the healing begin. ●

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Fall Into Health

Beyond the cleanse, simple tips to weather seasonal change

» **WINDBREAKER** In Ayurvedic medicine, the dry, cooler climes of fall and winter bring the wind constitution of vata into focus. Keep your body and skin hydrated by drinking water. Take your body weight, cut it in half and drink that number of ounces, advises Dr. Cory.

» **STAND TALL** Licensed acupuncturist and yoga/qi-gong expert Matt Pesendian of Summerland Healing Arts in Santa Barbara (bodhimanda.com) advises grounding your yoga practice through standing poses and inversions to activate major acu-points on the feet. This opens up the kidney channel, and in turn, the lungs. With inversions, the lungs are forced to work against gravity to aid in clearing impurities and nasal passages.

» **DRESS FOR SUCCESS** Salad dressing is an excellent way to sneak in herbs such as oregano, antimicrobial olive leaf (or oil) and Oregon grape, which has similar properties to infection-fighting goldenseal. Tierney Salter explains the effect will be milder than a therapeutic dose, but garlic and olive oil can boost the immune system daily. Leafy sea veggies, kale or broccoli enhance toxin elimination and bind heavy metals.

» **TO DIE(T) FOR.** When vata dosha is disturbed by overworking, Pesendian notes,

the air element effectively dries out the body — in particular, the lungs and large intestine, which can lead to difficult expectoration and constipation. Dr. Cory recommends warming, soothing foods such as khechari (mung beans and rice) to help keep digestive organs happy.

» **LOCA-MOTION** Explore foraged herbs native to your locale. "St. John's Wort grows wild along the most congested parts of our freeways," says the Seattle-based Salter. "[You're] frustrated and depressed in rush hour traffic, and a remedy is right there!"

» **GET HARDCORE** Massage therapist and yoga/pilates instructor Michelle Gantz, co-founder of Seattle-based yoga-surf retreat company Via Yoga (viayoga.com), recommends pilates lessons to center yourself by toning your core, so it can be there to support you when times are tough.

» **LYMPH-TASTIC** Stimulate lymphatic drainage by drybrushing skin, Dr. Cory suggests, and finishing your shower with a shot of cold water on the lower back.

» **FREE HEALING** Sleep is the number one way to reset your nervous system. And it doesn't cost a thing.

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