

# ***How Burdened is Your Body?***

By Ryan N. Harrison, MA

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“Detoxification” has become a nice buzz word lately. It sounds good, rolls off the tongue easily. And, depending on where you live and your lifestyle, if you happen to mention it to your friends or coworkers, it’s likely to make you seem “in the know” about natural healing and health. But do you know what detoxification really is and why is it so important?

The human body is an amazing thing. In its healthiest state it has the ability to keep itself clean and relatively poison-free. In this sense, detoxification is the body’s natural process of eliminating or neutralizing toxins. This happens via the liver, kidneys, and lungs, as well as in urine, feces, and through sweat. Yet, your body can become so overloaded that its natural detoxification system can’t keep up, and when this happens the toxins build up and can affect virtually all of the systems of the body, head to toe.

## **Detoxification Therapy**

Each year, people are exposed to thousands of toxic chemicals and pollutants in the Earth’s atmosphere, water, food, and soil. These toxins manifest themselves in the body in a variety of uncomfortable symptoms including decreased immune function, psychological or mood disturbances, neurotoxicity, hormonal dysfunction, and even cancer. Detoxification therapy helps to rid the body of chemicals and pollutants and can facilitate a return to health.

## **Chemical Cocktail**

Unfortunately, people today carry within their bodies a veritable chemical cocktail of modern-day industrial chemicals, pesticides, food additives, heavy metals, and anesthetics, not to mention the residues of pharmaceuticals, legal drugs (like alcohol, tobacco, and caffeine), and illegal drugs (like heroin, cocaine, and marijuana). The sad but undeniable truth is that we have created a living environment that is toxic to our bodies. Look at these facts, taken from respected sources:<sup>1, 2</sup>

- Over 69 million Americans live in areas that exceed smog standards.
- Most drinking water contains over 700 chemicals, including excessive amounts of the heavy metal lead.
- Some 3,000 chemicals are added to the food supply.
- As many as 10,000 chemicals in the form of solvents, emulsifiers, and preservatives are used in food processing and storage.
- U.S. chemical companies hold licenses to make 75,000 chemicals for commercial use; the federal government registers an average of 2,000 newly synthesized chemicals each year.
- The government has tallied 5,000 chemical ingredients in cosmetics; more than 3,200 chemicals added to food; 1,010 chemicals used in 11,700 consumer products; and 500 chemicals used as active ingredients in pesticides.

- In 1998 U.S. industries reported manufacturing 6.5 trillion pounds of 9,000 different chemicals, and in 2000 major U.S. industries reported dumping 7.1 billion pounds of 650 industrial chemicals into our air and water.
- Chemical companies are not required to tell the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) how their compounds are used or monitor where their products end up in the environment. Neither does U.S. law require chemical companies to conduct basic health and safety testing of their products either before or after they are commercialized.
- Eighty percent of all applications to produce a new chemical are approved by the U.S. EPA with no health and safety data; eighty percent of these are approved in three weeks.

If these numbers startle you, that's a good thing. No one knows how long some of these chemicals remain inside us once they are ingested or otherwise introduced to the body. And even the toxins that our bodies *do* know how to break down require extra metabolic energy expenditure to complete the detoxification process. That means less energy for other important things, like keeping the immune system up to speed.

A recent groundbreaking study was conducted by the Mount Sinai School of Medicine in New York, in collaboration with the Environmental Working Group and Commonweal. Researchers at two major laboratories found an average of 91 industrial compounds, pollutants, and other chemicals in the blood and urine of only nine volunteers, with a total of 167 chemicals found in the group. Like most of us, the nine people tested do not work with chemicals on the job and do not live near an industrial facility. Of the 167 chemicals found in those nine tested individuals, 76 are known to cause cancer in humans or animals, 94 are toxic to the brain and nervous system, and 79 cause birth defects or abnormal development. What's more, *the danger of exposure to these chemicals in combination has never been studied.*

In general, it's a frightening – and frighteningly true – scenario, and one that we simply cannot afford to let be swept under the carpet or forgotten. Dr. Marshall Mandell, one of the world's leading allergists and father of bio-ecologic medicine stated:

*The current level of chemicals in the food and water supply, and the indoor and outdoor environment, has lowered our threshold of resistance to disease and has altered our body's metabolism, causing enzyme dysfunction, nutritional deficiencies, and hormonal imbalances.<sup>3</sup>*

Is it any surprise then, that although America is considered one of the wealthiest countries in the world, it doesn't even rank in the United Nations top 20 list of the *healthiest*?<sup>4</sup>

### **Citing Parasites**

Did you know that at some time in their lives, three out of every five Americans will have had a parasite living inside of them? Easier to contract than some less deadly diseases, parasites are among the most highly numbered living organisms in the world – and they live right inside of you. But what does that mean?

The August 2000 issue of *Discover* magazine made this incredible statement:

*Every living thing has at least one parasite that lives inside or on it, and many, including humans, have far more. Scientists...are only just beginning to discover exactly how powerful these hidden inhabitants can be, but their research is pointing to a remarkable possibility: Parasites may rule the world. The notion that tiny creatures we've largely taken for granted are such a dominant force is immensely disturbing. We are collections of cells that work together, kept harmonized by chemical signals. If an organism can control those signals — an organism like a parasite — then it can control us. And therein lies the peculiar and precise horror of parasites.<sup>5</sup>*

The problem is simple: The average American diet produces a sick colon, complete with deadly fecal build up that becomes the perfect breeding ground for parasites. Humans can actually play host to over 100 different kinds of parasites, ranging from those that are microscopic to tapeworms that can grow to be several feet in length. And they don't

<b>Some Common Signs of Parasites in Humans</b>	
Constantly bloated abdomen	Inability to lose weight
Dark circles around or under eyes	Bad breath
Diarrhea or chronic constipation	Persistent acne
Teeth grinding	Insomnia
Cravings for sweets	Moodiness
Depression	Chronic fatigue
Anemia	PMS
Bad body odor	Food allergies
Sinus congestion	Digestive problems
Constant abdominal discomfort	Anal itching
Water retention	

just sit in your intestines. They can migrate to other parts of the body, including the liver, lungs, muscles, joints, skin, blood, and even to the brain.<sup>6</sup>

While they are not terribly difficult to clean from the body, parasites are often unsuspected and therefore completely unnoticed by their hosts.

This allows the parasites to thrive, taking the most valuable nutrients away from the host, who then has to deal not only with poor nutrition and all of its attendant complications, but parasitic waste products as well.

### **The Body Burden**

Scientists refer to the level of a person's chemical and toxin exposure as an individual's *body burden* — the consequence of lifelong exposure to industrial chemicals that are used in thousands of consumer products and which linger as contaminants in air, water, food, and in the soil. There are literally hundreds of chemicals in drinking water, household air, dust, treated tap water and food. And they come from household products like detergent, insulation, fabric treatments, cosmetics, paints, upholstery, computers and TVs. What's more, they accumulate in fat, blood and organs, or are passed through the body in breast milk, urine, feces, sweat, semen, hair and nails.<sup>7</sup>

<b>What's Your Body Burden?</b>
Curious to know what kind of chemical cocktail you're carrying around inside? If you'd like to find out how many toxins may be contributing to your ill health or otherwise compromising your immune system, log on at: <a href="http://www.ewg.org/reports/bodyburden/usertest/index.php">http://www.ewg.org/reports/bodyburden/usertest/index.php</a> and take the test. Though the results may surprise you, remember that "knowledge is power."

Carrying a high body burden translates into all sorts of maladies: Headaches, insomnia, constipation, fatigue, weakness, blurred vision, greater susceptibility to infection, allergic reactions, joint pain, recurrent respiratory problems, back pain, mood changes, stomach pain, digestive problems...the list goes on and on. It's shocking to realize that many of the problems just mentioned have become so commonplace in our culture that we don't stop to wonder why we experience them with such regularity. There are entire over-the-counter product lines that depend on us to be and feel ill. Indeed, some companies *need* us to carry a high body burden!

### **The Bad News**

The simple truth is that toxic chemicals enter our bodies *every day* in the form of unhealthy and refined foods, additives, pesticides and environmental pollutants. These harmful molecules can be found in great abundance in our air, drinking water and food supply. Chemicals poison our lakes, oceans, soil, and as a consequence, our bodies. In today's world the body's natural detoxification system becomes quickly overburdened and is unable to function like it is meant to and like it has in past generations. Since we are unable to process or eliminate these "modern" toxins, they become stored in our glands, tissues and cells, slowly breaking down all body systems on a cellular level. This process takes place gradually and undetectably, until the onset of obesity and disease finally signals their presence.<sup>8</sup>

As if that were not enough, we also need to worry about parasites and the very real threat they pose to our health and wellbeing. "Silent killers" of sorts, many of us are never even aware that we are offering our bodies as homes to these harmful creatures. Even worse, we may be eating the kind of diet that directly encourages their growth and proliferation. And parasites don't just "go away" – they can stay inside us our entire lives if we don't clean them out of our bodies. That alone should be reason enough for everyone to complete a detoxification program.

As you can see, without help our bodies are destined to weaken, break down, and fall apart. When this happens, it lowers our quality of life and also affects the lives of our families and loved ones. You can see it all around you today: people succumbing to infections, experiencing illnesses of all kinds, and popping pills that (at best) only cover up the symptoms, and (at worst) weaken or poison the body even further. No doubt about it, it's a grim picture.

But it doesn't have to be that way.

### **The Good News**

Fortunately, the human body is quite resilient. One of America's leaders in complementary medicine today, Dr. Andrew Weil is a firm believer that our bodies want to be healthy: "Health is the condition of perfect balance, when all systems run smoothly and energy circulates freely. This is the natural condition, the one in which least effort is expended; therefore, when the body is out of balance, it wants to get back to it."<sup>9</sup> When we take the steps necessary to alleviate our body burden, we assist it with its natural process of detoxification. We literally give our body the extra nutrients, natural substances and energy it needs in order to set the balance straight and get the process of detoxification back in high gear.

Now – more than ever before – it is imperative that we assist our body’s detoxification processes. Detoxification is a natural, health-preserving therapy, which helps remove harmful toxins from the cells and tissues, restoring their immune-protecting functions. Dr. Elson Haas, Director of the Preventive Medical Center of Marin, in San Rafael, CA, and author of *The Detox Diet* says, “The process of detoxification...is the missing link to rejuvenating the body and preventing such chronic diseases as cancer, cardiovascular problems, arthritis, diabetes, and obesity. The modern diet, with excess animal proteins, fats, caffeine, alcohol, and chemicals, inhibits the optimum function of our cells and tissues. The cleansing of toxins and waste products will restore function and vitality.”<sup>10</sup>

### **What to Look For**

All detoxification programs are not equal. Some, due to the relatively recent discovery of the need of detoxification, are nothing more than low-quality attempts to cash in on a potential market. So, you need to know what makes a good detoxification program. Here are the components that I suggest:

- **An “All Systems” Detoxification Program.** While it is great to target one particular system of the body from time to time and as necessary, such a regimen is no substitute for a complete, full-body cleanse. Completing a detoxification program that cleans all systems of the body is an essential step to achieving maximum health and wellness.
- **A Convenient and User-Friendly Program.** Let’s face it, the more difficult the detoxification procedure, the less likely most people are to start it, let alone see it through. Luckily, detoxifying is not as difficult as you may think. You shouldn’t have to make trips to and from a detoxification facility or specialist, and in general, the program needn’t be uncomfortable or something so complicated that you don’t want to try it again. I recommend finding a detoxification program that comes pre-assembled and ready-to-use so that you do not have to spend hours and hours searching for all the right components. But be aware and do your research: never sacrifice quality for convenience. The right detoxification program will offer both.
- **Natural, “Human-Friendly” Ingredients.** You should only use a detoxification program if it contains 100% natural, non-genetically modified ingredients. After all, you can’t expect to help detoxify your body by pouring more potentially-harmful synthetic chemicals into it! Look for a program that uses primarily herbs, vitamins and minerals, and steer clear of anything with ingredients that you can’t pronounce.
- **Anti-Parasite Support.** Recent medical studies suggest that 85 – 95% of the North American adult population is infected with at least one form of parasite. Easily spread from person to person and through contaminated water, food and soil, parasites cause our bodies to lose their biological balance by secreting toxins and damaging vital organs.<sup>11</sup> A good detoxification program will have an anti-parasite component to help expel parasites as well as to clear their eggs and hatching larvae from the body.
- **Intestinal/Colon Cleansing Support.** Making sure that the bowels are consistently active is vital to healthy detoxification. Toxins and “dead” foods lead to poor digestion, constipation, toxic colon build-up, weight gain and low energy. These

common symptoms are more than just an inconvenience – they can lead to long-term health problems and serious disease. Irritable bowel syndrome, constipation, gas, diverticulitis and colon cancer are simply not things we like to discuss. And yet, as the old expression goes, “death begins in the colon.” Don't believe it? Ask any coroner. Autopsies often reveal colons that are plugged up to 80% with waste material.<sup>12</sup>

- **Probiotic Support.** You may not be aware of this, but inside each of us live vast numbers – as in, several thousand billion – of bacteria without which we could not remain in good health. We call these “friendly” bacteria to distinguish them from the “harmful” bacteria that also inhabit our bodies. When the “harmful” bacteria proliferate and outnumber the “friendly” bacteria, we experience all manner of ailments, including excessive gas, bloating, diarrhea, intestinal toxicity, constipation and poor absorption of nutrients. If this imbalance is left untreated the symptoms can become chronic and can compromise the immune system, leading to other serious illnesses. A good detoxification program will provide you with a potent probiotic to help tip the scale back in favor of the “friendly” bacteria. Look for a probiotic that contains at least eight different strains of “friendly” bacteria and which is “enteric coated.” This ensures the bacteria are released in the intestines where they are needed and not in the stomach, where they can be destroyed by digestive juices.
- **Multivitamin/Mineral Support.** Few Americans actually obtain the minimum recommended amounts of vitamins and minerals from their diet, and yet our bodies cannot function optimally without them. When you add to that the fact that an unhealthy and toxin-burdened body cannot make complete use of vitamins and minerals as they are made available, you have a recipe for very poor health. As your body becomes progressively cleaner and toxin-free, its ability to uptake and utilize much-needed vitamins and minerals increases dramatically. This, in turn, supercharges your body, optimizing it to perform all of its functions flawlessly.
- **Oral Chelation.** Probably one of the most beneficial and yet unknown treatments available today, oral chelation is highly effective at assisting the body in the removal of dangerous heavy metals and toxins. A well-documented, firmly established medical practice, it draws toxins and metabolic wastes from the bloodstream, thereby promoting improved circulation, reduction of internal inflammation caused by free radicals, and anti-aging effects that remarkably increase a person's energy. Most oral chelation supplements will contain a handful of vitamins that are natural antioxidants, but the best oral chelation products will also contain an ingredient called EDTA (ethylenediaminetetraacetic acid). EDTA is a naturally safe chemical that passes through the body, taking toxins and heavy metals out with it. It is so safe, in fact, that according to current drug safety standards, it is nearly three-and-a-half times *less* toxic to the human system than aspirin.<sup>13</sup>

While it sounds like a large bill to fill, a good detoxification program will meet and/or exceed all these suggestions. Because detoxification is such an item of interest lately – and with good reason – your options are fairly open. By staying within the guidelines prescribed above, you can take a lot of the hassle out of figuring out if a program will meet your detoxification needs.

## Everyday Toxins

If you use or are in contact with any of the below commonplace items or substances, you could be subjecting yourself to harmful toxic chemicals. Yes, it's a long list...and it isn't exhaustive. Visit <http://www.ewg.org/reports/bodyburden/dynam-mfgs.php> to see a more complete list and to find additional details.

Adhesives	Aerosols	Ammunition
Anti-lock brakes	Batteries	Bleach
Brake fluid	Cables	Carpet
Ceramics	Chipping paint in older homes	Colognes
Computers	Contact lens cleaning solution	Cosmetics
Crystal tableware	Dental fillings	Detergents
Drugs	Dyes	Electronic equipment
Erasable ink	Floor cleaners	Fluorescent lamps
Food (additives)	Food (flavorings)	Food packaging
Fungicides	Gasoline	Glass
Hair spray	Hand cleaners	Hand cream
Insect repellent	Insecticide	Latex paint
Light switches in cars	Liquid soap	Lotion
Lubricants	Medical devices	Medication
Mosquito repellent	Nail polishes	Paint
Paper	Perfume	Pesticides
Plastic	Rubber	Rubbing alcohol
Rug shampoos	Seafood	Shampoo
Shaving cream	Soap	Spot cleaners
Spot removers	Stain/varnishes	Thermometers
Thermostats	Tire cleaners	Vaccinations
VCR head cleaners	Wax strippers	Windshield cleaners
Wood finishes	X-ray shields	And more...

<sup>1</sup> Goldberg, Burton. *Alternative Medicine: The Definitive Guide*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. © 2002

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.bodyburden.com>

<sup>3</sup> Goldberg, Burton. *Alternative Medicine: The Definitive Guide*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. © 2002, pg. 168.

<sup>4</sup> [http://depts.washington.edu/eqhlth/pages/more\\_questions.pdf](http://depts.washington.edu/eqhlth/pages/more_questions.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.DrNatura.com>

<sup>6</sup> Global Institute for Alternative Medicine, *Toxicity and Detoxification*, © 2002, pg. 7.

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.ewg.org/reports/bodyburden/findings.php>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.ScienceDetox.com>

<sup>9</sup> Weil, Andrew, M.D., *Spontaneous Healing*, © 1995, pg. 36.

<sup>10</sup> Goldberg, Burton. *Alternative Medicine: The Definitive Guide*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. © 2002, pg. 169.

<sup>11</sup> Goldberg, Burton. *Alternative Medicine: The Definitive Guide*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. © 2002, pg. 847.

<sup>12</sup> *Vegetarian Times*, March 1998.

<sup>13</sup> Goldberg, Burton. *Alternative Medicine: The Definitive Guide*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. © 2002, pg. 146.