

Article Link: <http://www.webmd.com/balance/guide/natural-colon-cleansing-is-it-necessary>

## Health & Balance

Retrieved 7/26/12  
from websearch

### Tools & Resources

Ease Pain With Tai Chi  
Can Stress Hurt Teeth?  
Stress-Reducing Foods

Why Stress Causes Heartburn  
Quit: Truth About Hangovers  
11 Surprising Energy Zappers



The practice of natural colon cleansing dates back to ancient Greece. In the U.S., cleansing the colon – the large intestine – became popular in the 1920s and 1930s. But when the theories behind it lost support, it fell out of favor. Recently, though, colon cleansing – using, for example, teas, enzymes, or colon irrigation – has experienced resurgence.

Is colon cleansing good for you? The jury is still out. That is because researchers have devoted little study to colon cleansing. For now, here is some information that might help you decide whether colon cleansing is for you.

There are two main colon-cleansing methods. One involves buying products; the other involves seeing a practitioner to have a colon irrigation.

**Colon cleansing with powdered or liquid supplements.** You take some supplements used for colon cleansing by mouth. Others you take through the rectum. Either way, the idea is to help the colon to expel its contents. You can find these products on the Internet or in health food stores, supermarkets, or pharmacies. They include:

- Enemas
- Laxatives—both stimulant and non stimulant types
- Herbal teas
- Enzymes
- Magnesium

**Colon cleansing with colon irrigation (high colonics).** The first modern colonic machine was invented about 100 years ago. Today, colonic hygienists or colon hydrotherapists perform colon irrigations. Colon irrigations work somewhat like an enema. But they involve much more water and none of the odors or discomfort. While you lie on a table, a low-pressure pump or a gravity-based reservoir flushes several gallons of water through a small tube inserted into your rectum.

After the water is in the colon, the therapist may massage your abdomen. Then you release the water like a regular bowel movement; the process flushes out the fluids and waste. The therapist may repeat the process, and a session may last up to an hour.

The practitioner may use a variety of water pressures and temperatures and may or may not combine water with enzymes, herbs, coffee, or probiotics. Probiotics are supplements containing beneficial bacteria.

One of the main theories behind colon cleansing is an ancient belief called the theory of autointoxication. This is the belief that undigested meat and other foods cause mucus buildup in the colon. This buildup produces toxins, the theory goes, which enter the blood's circulation, poisoning the body.

Some people claim these toxins cause a wide range of symptoms, such as:

- Fatigue
- Headache
- Weight gain
- Low energy

On the surface, the idea of toxins being reabsorbed by the body makes some sense. After all, rectal suppositories are used to rapidly administer drugs. Could toxins, too, be quickly entering the bloodstream from the colon?

If colon cleansing has any effect, however, it likely has less to do with toxins than with its impact on the nervous system. What's the evidence? Reflexes in the bowel affect the entire nervous system. In fact, a wide range of symptoms caused by constipation can be relieved by enemas. If this is true of enemas, then perhaps colon cleansing has a similar effect.

### Recommended Related to Mind, Body, Spirit

Your Guide to Never Feeling Tired Again

By Nancy Rones 22 ways to tackle life's biggest energy zappers. Every day, 2.2 million Americans complain of being tired. Most of us chalk it up to having too much to do and not enough time to do it in, especially during extra-busy periods. But often the true culprits are our everyday habits: what we eat, how we sleep, and how we cope emotionally. Read on for some simple, recharging changes that can help you tackle all of the energy stealers in your life. Energize Your Diet ...

Read the Your Guide to Never Feeling Tired Again article >>

July 26, 2012

Article Link: <http://www.webmd.com/balance/guide/natural-colon-cleansing-is-it-necessary?page=2>

## Health & Balance

### Tools & Resources

Ease Pain With Tai Chi

Can Stress Hurt Teeth?

Quiz: Truth About Hangovers

Why Grease Causes Heartburn

Stress-Reducing Foods

11 Surprising Energy Boosters



(continued)

The health claims made by producers of colon cleansing products and colon irrigation practitioners are broad and wide-reaching. Their main goal is to clear the colon of large quantities of stagnant, supposedly toxic waste encrusted on colon walls. Doing so, they claim, will enhance the vitality of the body.

Other stated goals include:

- Improving mental outlook
- Improving the immune system
- Losing weight
- Reducing the risk of colon cancer

Colon cleansing has been studied in relation to a few health concerns. These include:

- Fecal incontinence
- Ostomy (surgical connection between an intestine and the outside of the body) care
- Spasm during colonoscopy
- Drug withdrawal
- Before and during bowel surgeries

In most of these cases, no quality research has been done to tell whether or not a colon cleansing is helpful.

Are bowel movements enough to clear the colon? Or is it true that colon cleansing can be beneficial. This is still unclear. We do know that the body alone can do the following:

- Natural bacteria in the colon can detoxify food wastes.
- The liver also neutralizes toxins.
- Mucus membranes in the colon can keep unwanted substances from reentering the blood and tissues.
- The colon sheds old cells about every 3 days, preventing a buildup of harmful material.
- The normal number of bowel movements varies from person to person.
- Increasing the number of bowel movements doesn't improve weight loss. That's because the body absorbs most calories before they reach the large intestine.

Remember that "natural" doesn't necessarily mean safe. The government doesn't regulate natural colon cleansing products, so their potency, safety, and purity can't be guaranteed. And, each state has its own rules about whether or not practitioners must be professionally licensed.

If you do decide to see a colon-cleansing therapist, choose one who is licensed by a recognized national organization and who follows that organization's standards. It's always a good idea to talk with your primary health provider before starting a new practice such as colon cleansing.

Although the risk becomes greater the more often you have a colon cleanse, a review of similar procedures, such as enemas and

Are there risks associated with natural colon cleansing?

Remember that "natural" doesn't necessarily mean safe. The government doesn't regulate natural colon cleansing products, so their potency, safety, and purity can't be guaranteed. And, each state has its own rules about whether or not practitioners must be professionally licensed.

If you do decide to see a colon-cleansing therapist, choose one who is licensed by a recognized national organization and who follows that organization's standards. It's always a good idea to talk with your primary health provider before starting a new practice such as colon cleansing.

Although the risk becomes greater the more often you have a colon cleanse, a review of similar procedures, such as enemas and sigmoidoscopies, shows the risk of severe effects is low when colon irrigations are performed by trained personnel using low pressures with the right equipment. In Britain, where practitioners carry out 5,600 colon irrigations each month, no serious side effects have been reported.

However, there are some potential side effects:

- Vomiting, nausea, cramps
- Dizziness, a sign of dehydration
- Mineral imbalance
- Potential interference with medication absorption on day of procedure
- Bowel perforation
- Infection
- Depletion of helpful normal bowel flora unless replaced (i.e. probiotics)

**Are there risks associated with natural colon cleansing? continued...**

Article Link: <http://www.webmd.com/balance/guide/natural-colon-cleansing-is-it-necessary?page=3>

## Health & Balance

### Tools & Resources

- [Ease Pain With Tai Chi](#)
- [Why Stress Causes Heartburn](#)
- [Can Stress Hurt Teeth?](#)
- [Stress-Reducing Foods](#)
- [Quiz: Truth About Hangovers](#)
- [11 Stepping Energy Zippers](#)



(continued)

**Be aware**, if the therapist adds a substance to the water during colon irrigation, you run the risk of an allergic reaction. Do not use laxatives or colon irrigations long term. They can irritate or upset the balance of your colon's good bacteria and interfere with normal bowel function.

#### Avoid colon irrigations, if you have:

- Diverticulitis
- Ulcerative colitis
- Crohn's disease
- Severe hemorrhoids
- Tumors in your rectum or colon
- Recent bowel surgery
- Heart disease or kidney disease, unless approved by your health care provider

Regarding children, there may be an increase risk of mineral imbalances, therefore use caution with children. Follow the guidelines of the IACHC (International Association of Colon Hydrotherapists [www.i-act.org](http://www.i-act.org)) and your health care provider.

What you eat – not what you flush through your colon – may have the greatest impact on colon health, lowering your risk of colon cancer and enhancing your overall health.

Increasing both soluble and insoluble fiber can help with a wide range of gastrointestinal problems, including constipation, diverticular disease, and colorectal cancer. The typical American consumes 10 grams to 15 grams a day, but you need closer to 20 grams to 35 grams. If there are no gluten issues, add sources of both insoluble fiber, such as cereal and whole grains, and soluble fiber, such as bran, fruit, vegetables, and oatmeal.

Also, drink plenty of fluids, but drink alcohol in moderation. Avoid tobacco and limit red meat. And, of course, get screened for colon cancer beginning at age 50, or earlier if your doctor advises.

#### Further Reading:

- [Ayurveda-Related Libronation](#)
- [Ayurveda-Topic Overview](#)
- [The Truth About Natural Liver Detox Diets \(Liver Cleansing\)](#)
- [Are Fasting Diets Safe and Effective?](#)
- [Fasting May Cut Heart Risks](#)
- [5 Home Remedy No-Nos](#)
- [Is Fasting Healthy?](#)
- [See All Detoxification Diets and Procedures Topics](#)

[← PREVIOUS PAGE](#)

1 | 2 | 3

Save This Article For Later

#### WebMD Medical Reference

SOURCES:  
 Iorne, S. *Journal of Herbal Pharmacotherapy*, 2006; vol. 6(2): pp. 93-100.  
 American Cancer Society: *Colon Therapy*.  
 Baptist Health Systems: "Colon Cleansing: Don't Be Misled by the Claims."  
 Natural Standard.

Reviewed by Kimball Johnson, MD on May 14, 2012

[View Article Sources](#)

**SOURCES:**

Horne, S. *Journal of Herbal Pharmacotherapy*, 2006; vol. 6(2): pp. 93-100.

American Cancer Society: Colon Therapy."

Baptist Health Systems: "Colon Cleansing: Don't Be Misled by the Claims."

Natural Standard.

Reviewed by Kimball Johnson, MD on May 14, 2012