

THE QUEST FOR AN INTERNAL MAKEOVER

The detox movement is so big it could rival the following of Jimmy Choo and Manolo Blahnik put together. But is it just another buzzword that will soon exhaust itself or does it have more to prove? Lu Jing Shia went on a "cleansing" journey to discover.

THE CALLING

One day as I was enjoying packets of sweet, delicious jelly, I thought how it was a shame that our ancestors didn't get to enjoy such foods in their days. Or were they lucky enough not to? I flipped over the packet and read the ingredients. I can't say I understand anything beyond the word "sugar"—and I knew well enough that alone isn't good for the body.

So in one of my "I don't feel healthy" panicky episodes, I embarked on an "I must get a healthier lifestyle" path. The first thing that crossed my mind was giving my body a detox. If there is one thing that makes beauty and health go hand in hand is the fact that no amount of good can be reaped if you don't get rid of the bad. Just like the best serum will not be able to do its magic if I don't exfoliate dead cells on my skin, no amount of vitamins or healthful foods I ingest will help my body.

THE DETOXIFICATION QUEST

With that began my search for a credible detox centre. Upon reflection, I remember coming across various articles on health retreats and

how they work wonders for your body and sense of well-being. To my utter but expected disappointment, I couldn't get hold of a health centre that provides a health retreat. In the midst of these, there was a centre on everyone's lips—Pure Health, which is located in the easily accessible Plaza Damas in Sri Hartamas, Kuala Lumpur.

So I Googled them, jotted down their number and made that call, but not before I read from their Web site that the programme includes colon hydrotherapies—five sessions to be exact. Now for those of you who are familiar with enema, let it be said (which I later discovered much to my relief) that the former is far more effective, and half as embarrassing as I'd thought.

DEBUNKING THE MYTH

After calling up to set an appointment, I went in filled with much expectation and expecting nothing at the same time. I'd heard so many different versions of the definition of "detox" that I was starting to believe it was just a buzzword. Then I met Wendy Tee, director of

Pure Health. Together with her husband, Brian Wong, they founded this wellness centre. When asked about their "moment of truth" I found that it wasn't having a nightmare of themselves dying or jolting results from a medical check-up that prompted the birth of Pure Health. In fact, nothing dramatic was in play. "We were both corporate workers and had no time in the world for health. But whenever we got to it, there would be workout sessions, and a healthy diet and supplements were thrown in as well. But no matter how much we tried, we couldn't seem to get healthy. Feeling tired and sluggish was almost a daily affair. So like any Internet-savvy people would do, we searched the Internet on detoxification and read the benefits of colon hydrotherapies," says Wendy.

And that was the beginning of a new life for them. They tried out colon hydrotherapy treatment abroad and gained so much health benefits they decided to bring home this important health treatment. So they took a colon hydrotherapy course in the U.S. and are now certified members of the International Association of Colon Hydrotherapists.

WHY DETOX?

Remember how at one time we were not troubled by the AIDS epidemic spreading like wildfire because we all had the mentality that "it only happens to prostitutes, drug addicts and homosexuals"? It wasn't until our government started HIV awareness campaigns that we realised that it can happen to anybody—and anybody means even you. Well here's a similarly obnoxious confession. Up until the day I met Wendy, I thought only the "little people" get sick. You know, the ones who never paid attention to what they eat or drink, never exercised a muscle in their lives nor took multivitamins. Having been in health and beauty journalism for almost five years, I've always lived by tenets held by experts in the industry. I did not consider myself immune to diseases; just more resilient to them. But the occasional flu and headaches was almost like a prerequisite to my existence, which I ticked as "frequent" on the health questionnaire, much to Wendy's dismay. Then she winced when I told her that I keep aspirins in every one of my handbags for convenience.

"It's scary when people think that headaches and migraines are normal. They're not. It is the toxins inside our body that is making us ill. And they are not just what you ate a few days ago; they could be what you ate years before. This is where a detox programme can help you regain good health. You have to get rid of the bad stuff to kick-start a new healthy lifestyle," explains Wendy.

The rule of thumb is, if it isn't food, don't eat it. Your body knows what to do with real food. Our problems begin with processed foods such as refined flour, sugar, hydrogenated oils and artificial flavouring. Most of these make up the ingredients of pizzas, burgers, instant noodles, crackers, cookies and pastries. Neon-coloured foods (yes, those colourful M&Ms), non-dairy creamers, and diet colas are lab creations that may cause a host of weight and health problems. "If you multiply those 'so-called food' with say, your lifetime, you'll get tonnes of waste inside your body. That's because not knowing what to do with these foreign items, your body just stores them inside the colons and it has to work extra hard to push it out of you during bowel movement. This vicious cycle doesn't end because we keep ingesting non-healthy food and it leads to toxins build-up which leads to symptoms such as body aches, joint pains, constipation, incidence of kidney stones, allergies, sinusitis, bad breath, gout and even indigestion, insomnia and lethargy. As long as we don't get rid of these toxins, the symptoms will stay and that's why we will always feel sick and unhealthy regardless of how many vitamins or exercise we're getting. So the first step in detoxification is to stop the inflow of toxins so it helps to speed up the process of detoxification through four eliminative organs: colons, kidneys, skin and lungs (nasal passage). By detoxifying, you're actually helping these four organs to function as efficiently as possible.

AND SO IT BEGINS....

A day before my treatment was to begin, I was given instructions on pre-detox steps. Only vegetables and fruits were allowed.



This was to ensure there was more fibre in my body. The less your body has to work to digest food, the better you'll cope during the detox.

Imagine my horror when I realised there was absolutely no solid food allowed for the next five days. I could, however, still take the necessary liquid nutrients a body needs such as, Udo's Choice Ultimate Oil Blend (essential fatty acids), wheat grass juice, fruit juice, and psyllium husks and pro-biotics (good bacteria supplements). All these are supposed to be taken three times a day as my meals except for the apple cider vinegar which I was supposed to drink with water once in the morning.

My first taste of the oil had me perplexed and disgusted at the same time. I didn't know what to make of it. I just hoped that the rest of the supplements would taste better. Minutes later, that became mere wishful thinking. The wheat grass juice was too powdery and as for the psyllium husks, well, that was in an "intolerable" league of its own. Let's just say that I made the mistake of drowning the husks in warm water and it turned into the worst starchy cereal I've ever had the misfortune to taste—and I'd thought I could do those *Fear Factor* stunts on TV. Later I discovered it tasted more decent when mixed into fruit juices. The vinegar drink in the morning was a small feat for someone who sucked on lemon for fun, so that I could do.

THE PROGRAMME

I was excited and scared on my first day but seeing the dramatic changes it has made to both Wendy and Brian, (there were before and after pictures) I was only all too eager to start, except for a hint of apprehension holding me back—the idea of having a tube up and into where the sun doesn't shine isn't exactly my idea of fun (as opposed to what some bedtime-activities enthusiasts would have you believe otherwise).

My hydrotherapist, Perpetua, took my weight and blood pressure (which was a tad too high for their liking) before leading me into a treatment room. The "Libbe" Lower Bowel Evacuation Device on which I'm supposed to lie down for the treatment is always disinfected twice, so hygiene in that place is of highest quality. She clearly explained each step of the procedure and once I'd understood everything, she left the room for me to prepare. To my relief, the tube that is supposed to be inserted into the anus to pass distilled water into my colon was the size of a 2B pencil. Even better, only about

HOW DETOX AFFECTS YOUR SKIN

Countless claims have been made about radiant skin after a detox. Here are five reasons why that claim is true.

1. YOUR ANTIOXIDANT INTAKE INCREASES TEN-FOLD.

By eating more nutrient-rich food such as vegetables, fruits, nuts and whole-grain foods, your body has more ability to fight free radicals that attack the healthy cells in our skin causing premature ageing.

2. YOU ARE DRINKING MORE THAN EVER.

Your body is made up of 70 percent of water and uses it for every function it performs including plumping fine lines and wrinkles, and lubricating tissue cells. So when you keep yourself hydrated at all times, your skin will not look drawn, dull and devitalised. Remember that for every cup of coffee or tea you down, drink an extra glass of water; for every alcoholic drink, have two glasses.

3. YOU ARE GETTING MORE SLEEP.

Clearing toxins from your body helps it to heal itself, so your systems function better and more efficiently. With that comes more energy in the day, so you don't take naps. You then unwind faster and retire early to bed, giving your body quality sleep, which makes waking up the next morning easier—a healthy cycle. Falling into bed at 3 a.m. and waking at 11 a.m. will not have the same benefits as having an early night. Our bodies have an inbuilt body clock—a circadian rhythm that roughly corresponds with the cycle of darkness and light. By following our natural impulse to fall asleep at night and wake early in the morning, we get more quality sleep so our skin renews itself better.

4. YOU ARE ALL STEAMED UP.

This is in reference to the infrared therapy and perhaps some saunas you might be visiting. As we perspire from the heat, toxins that congest skin are expelled through pores. This also increases the surface blood supply, providing essential nutrients that enhance the development of collagen.

5. YOU ARE SCRUBBING MORE.

Daily dry skin brushing is highly recommended to stimulate a sluggish lymphatic system where toxins have accumulated. The increased blood flow to the skin helps to remove impurities, deliver vital nutrients and stimulate cellular activity, leaving skin healthy and glowing.

1.5 inches of it needs to go in—made painless with lubricants. In less than five minutes, I was already in position, covered with the blanket provided and I rang the bell for Perpetua.

The initial sensation of water flowing in was a bit unusual and uncomfortable. Only when the cramps kicked in and sensing my panic, Perpetua gently explained that was due to the gas inside me. After I was a bit more settled, she left the room and would only check on me at intervals, but should I ever need help, she was just a buzzer away.

The whole process was private and so much less intimidating than I had anticipated. The 45-minute treatment ended pretty quickly—maybe I was too preoccupied by what was coming out of me.

The next 45 minutes was spent lying down for my infrared therapy. The heat penetrates one to two inches below the skin, which causes the body to sweat at a temperature of 35°C to 45°C, the ace over conventional saunas you get at gyms. At 43°C fat becomes water soluble and can be disposed of by sweating. The combination of heat and sweat didn't bother me at all. In fact I was so relaxed to the point of slumber. You can guess by now my favourite part of this programme. Just be prepared to see red, blotched skin on your thighs and abdomen due to the heat. At the post-treatment weighing session, I lost 400 grams. Almost too little for too much effort, as I was so tired by then. But I was told not to be deterred as the more colon hydrotherapies I go through, more water will soften the hardened toxin for easier exit. Plus, I had to drink at least two litres of water a day to speed up that process and to ensure that I didn't retain water during treatments.

Despite Wendy's protests, I returned to the office to finish off some work and ended up sitting through the rest of the day with a headache, thanks to caffeine withdrawal. It is important that you get plenty of rest and sleep so your body can expend more energy towards detoxifying the body. That is why extreme exercises are not recommended during this period.

At 5 p.m., with my head pounding and my stomach rumbling, all I wanted was to sleep, so that led to an early night.

Surprisingly, waking up the next morning was a breeze. I got up just before the alarm rang, felt great and on top of the world. The detox was working its magic already. Colleagues

commented on my radiance and the second session was, in fact, easier than the first. It was in the evening that my energy started spiralling downwards, causing me to look at the clock every five minutes wishing it was time to go home.

The remaining days became a ritual: I would rise to the alarm effortlessly, performing cleansing breaths and dry skin brushing (all help to detox the body) and diligently took all the liquid nutrients which was becoming increasingly bearable. My healing crisis involved nothing more than coated tongue, headaches and the occasional giddiness. Hunger pangs never derailed my programme but I missed food for its sensorial experience. Life is so much less interesting when you don't get to munch and savour the taste of different foods.

And because of that, the thought of giving up was perpetually on my mind. Soon I grew tired and bored with the programme, and it was made worse when it was extended an extra day—the centre is closed on Sundays. But I hung in there and only cheated when I didn't exactly sieve the pulps from the oranges I was squeezing. Oh, OK and that bite of pumpkin pie! I'm only human.

But on the upside, my sense of smell and taste was heightened. The Udo's oil was nuttier on my taste buds, and the wheat grass juice went down my throat without my suppressing the urge to barf. Perfumes that I'd been using regularly because of their fresh scents became too strong for my liking. And when I craved for food, it was only for vegetables and fruits. No urges for my favourite pan-fried chicken with melted cheese.

On the last day of the programme, I felt like a schoolgirl attending the last day of school before the year-end holiday. I skipped my way into the centre, greeted everyone with a big smile and to my surprise had inexhaustible energy. The waste toxin that came out from my last 45-minute session was the most productive one. The waste material looked the same from second day onwards but I must say a lot came out that final day and I was a happy bunny to have ended the programme on a high note.

POST-DETOX DAYS

When it came to weight loss, it was a total of 2 kg in six days and my tummy was flatter due to the extrication of toxin. I eased into my post-detox days without any urge to binge. The interesting part had only just begun. I had to relearn my eating habits. Where I used to eat chillies with everything, I began to desire clear vegetable soups. The chicken-lover in me found the first bite of chicken to be well, cardboard-like. Such changes in me garnered

jaw-dropping reactions from my fellow friends. The effects were the same deep within me—I couldn't believe I didn't find chicken that appealing anymore. Now anyone who knows me would say that is amazing!

If I was already following a healthy diet, I became even more aware of what I eat now. I no longer reach for the can of crackers or that pack of instant noodles at meal times. Seeing what they did to my body was enough to put me off forever.

It's been a month after my detox and I'm still taking the supplements. To say that it was easy would be a lie. The choice to bin them has crossed my mind many times but I prefer to make them a daily affair. Now, those frequent headaches have disappeared. Overall, I feel lighter, cleaner and even more interested to start life anew, wanting to make each day healthier than the one before. It's given that there are days when pizzas win but I won't beat myself up for it. It's keeping check of what goes into my mouth for the other times that matter because more often than not, a healthy body begins with a healthy mind and that in itself is a true test of time. I keep telling myself, this newly detox-ed me cannot be just a phase I look back at one day with a sigh of regret. So will I recommend this detox programme? Heck, yes! I know the benefits from this go beyond physical health. It will change your outlook of life for the better.

PURE HEALTH SDN BHD

Unit B-O-3, Plaza Damas,
No. 60, Jalan Sri Hartamas 1,
Sri Hartamas, 50480 Kuala Lumpur
Tel: 03-6203 2097
www.purehealth.com.my

SHOCK THERAPY

The other common detox method is lymphatic drainage. The functions of the lymphatic system are closely related to that of the circulatory system. This treatment works by sending micro-currents to gently stimulate the lymph nodes and natural restoration process of the face and body. It may feel uncomfortable during your first few treatments, but as you progress, your body gets used to it and then the therapist can increase the voltage to enhance the results. Many use it for slimming, toning and minimising the appearance of cellulite. It is also ideal for the effective removal of toxins and water retention. Therefore, some have claimed it reduces eye bags and swollen legs and ankles. To try it for yourself at Ozmosis Health & Day Spa, call 03-2287 0380.

