

The detoxification process in our bodies happens naturally. Each day, our system works hard to transform toxins into compounds that the body can dispose of. There is little evidence to support taking “cleansing” supplements or severely restricting your intake to “detox”: such practices can even be harmful. However, there are certain things you can do to help your body do its job of naturally cleansing your system more efficiently.

Natural Detoxifiers:

“Smelly” foods

The sulfur in foods like garlic, onions, and eggs helps your system produce a natural chemical detoxifier that is involved in regulating your body’s cleansing process.

Though cruciferous vegetables—like cabbage, broccoli, Romanesco, Brussels sprouts, kale, and kohlrabi—may smell when cooked, they also contain powerful compounds called glucosinolates. Glucosinolates help the liver eliminate toxic compounds from your body. Other unlikely sources of glucosinolates are: radishes, watercress, mustard greens, turnips, rutabaga, and horseradish.



Water

Being well hydrated aids urine and stool removal, which helps your system eliminate toxins. Toxins are also removed through sweat, so be sure to replenish fluid lost during exercise or in steamy weather conditions.

Fiber-rich foods

Fiber binds to toxins and carries harmful compounds out of the body through your stool. Having regular bowel movements lessens the time that harmful compounds can hang out in your intestinal tract.

Good sources of fiber include: beans, whole wheat and other whole grains (e.g. oats), vegetables, fruits, nuts, and seeds. In addition, these foods contain plant chemicals that help rev up your body’s detoxification system.



Probiotics

Probiotics are *beneficial* bacteria found in fermented foods that may reduce the presence of *harmful* bacteria that can generate toxic byproducts in your intestines.

Increase your intake of probiotics naturally by consuming more: yogurt, tangy frozen yogurt, kefir, cultured cottage cheese, low fat or nonfat buttermilk, miso, tempeh (soybean cake), and kimchi (Korean vegetables).

Improve Your Diet using “Detoxifiers”

Cruciferous Vegetables

Think vegetables require a lot of prep? Think again. Broccoli, Brussels sprouts, and cauliflower take very kindly to roasting. Simply toss them with olive oil, salt, and pepper and bake them at 425 degrees until they caramelize. Cabbage and kale can be cooked down, so toss them in soups and stews. You can also substitute kale in many recipes that call for spinach.

Onions

Think beyond the onion ring. Roasted onions—prepared like you would the vegetables above—can be served as a savory side dish with roast beef or chicken. You can also sauté onions and use them as a base for pizza or as a bruschetta topping.

“Hot” Plants

Radishes, watercress, and horseradish add a little heat to foods without the spice burn. Slice radishes or toss some watercress into a salad for a little “bite.” Horseradish can be added to yogurt-based sauces or creamy dressings (like buttermilk ranch). Use the jarred, prepared variety or look for the horseradish root itself. To use the root, simply peel it like you would a carrot and grate it with a microplane or cheese grater.



Miso

Miso, or fermented soybean paste, is often found in red and white varieties. (White miso is more mild.) Miso can be mixed with a fat—like olive oil or butter—and tossed with vegetables to be roasted: think potatoes or squash. Miso can also be mixed with an acid (like orange juice or cider vinegar) and a fat (like sesame oil or olive oil) to make a dressing for cold noodles or salad greens. Miso not your thing? Try making a dressing using buttermilk or yogurt as the base instead.