

A Spring Detox

A springtime detox will help to shed any extra pounds gained during the winter months, speed up the digestive system, improve joint mobility and circulation, help clear and focus the mind, strengthen the immune system, increase motivation and encourage us to connect with the positive energy that the season of renewal and great transformation brings with it.

Fewer sunshine hours can reduce our levels of self-esteem and motivation, and on cold days the blood is directed away from the extremities of the body towards the vital organs, often resulting in stiff, achy muscles and lethargy. The lymphatic and digestive systems rely on muscular contractions to aid functioning, and if toxins begin to build up this can add extra strain to the often-challenged immune system.

Ancient yogis referred to the build up of toxins in the body and mind as 'Ama'. To remove Ama, the body must generate internal warmth or 'Tapas', and internal fire known as 'Agni'. Asanas combined with pranayamas and bandhas will help stimulate Tapas and Agni so that toxins and impurities can slowly be eliminated from both body and mind.



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Bandhas

Mula Bandha – the root lock

Practise by drawing up the pelvic floor muscles, eventually it is possible to locate the lock and activate only mula bandha (the cervix for a woman and the perineum for a man).

Uddiyana Bandha – the abdominal lock

Activate Mula Bandha then continue to draw up the internal muscles, the core muscles and finally pull your navel back towards your spine.

Jalandhara Bandha – the throat lock

To perform the throat lock the breath must be retained, the tip of the tongue rolled to the roof of the mouth and the chin is then dropped onto the chest. Always release the lock before you release the breath.

Maha bandha – the great lock

The great lock is when all three bandhas are performed simultaneously in the following order on an internal breath retention, Mula Bandha, Uddiyana Bandha and then Jalandhara, release in reverse order.

As you practise yoga, draw awareness to the internal fire (agni) which is just above the navel. Keep a steady constant flow of breath to maintain Agni and Tapas. By performing various bandhas, pranic energy and heat is locked into different areas of the body, and when the lock is released greater levels of impurities can be removed.

Nauli Kriya

A great cleansing technique for moving waste products through the digestive system.

In a standing position, exhale, squat slightly, bend forward and rest your hands on your thighs. Maintain this external breath retention and suck in the sides of your abdomen, isolating a central column of muscle. Attempt to churn this muscle in and out and from side to side. Inhale and come up to a standing position.

As the body is also subjected to various toxins through food, pollution and thoughts, we cannot expect one practice to remove all toxins. We must continue to practise these techniques so we can begin to enjoy the benefits of reduced Ama.

Bhoochari (gazing into nothingness)

Preform before meditation to clear and focus the mind.

Sit comfortably with a straight spine. Rest your hands on your thighs with the palms turned up. Close the eyes and breathe slowly in and out through the nose. Lift one arm and position the thumb against the up-

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per lip with the palm down and the elbow pointing out to the side. Open your eyes and direct the gaze to the little finger. Try not to blink as you hold for 1 minute and continue to breathe slowly through your nose. Then lower the arm and continue to direct your gaze at the empty space created by lowering the arm (the point of original focus). Again try and not blink whilst maintaining this from 5-10 minutes.

As part of your detox, start the day with the following sequence 6 times a week: Kapalabhati and Surya Namaskar to help move any stagnant energy accumulated overnight, and a few deep twists such as a variation of Marichyasana before finishing with a short relaxation.

Kapalabhati

Sit comfortably with the spine straight. Inhale deeply through the nose filling the lungs completely. Use a short sharp contraction of the diaphragm to push

some of the air out through your nose. Now allow a little more air to enter the lungs through the nose before pushing it out again using the short sharp contraction of the diaphragm. Continue breathing like this. You should be creating a sound similar to a steam train.

When starting Kapalabhati, begin with a cycle of 20 breaths. This can be gradually increased to a cycle of 100 breaths. At the end of each cycle take 1 complete inhalation followed by 1 complete exhalation. Repeat this technique for 3 complete cycles.

Marichyasana (Seated spinal twist)

Sit on the floor with both legs straight in front of you. Bend your left leg towards your chest. Rotate your torso toward your left knee. Wrap your right arm around the left knee and continue to rotate to the left. Keep your back straight throughout the posture - advanced practitioners may like to bind this posture too.