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LIFE HEALTH

Spring cleanse a tune-up for the body



By Melissa Carr, Special to 24 hours
Thursday, March 20, 2014 2:15:32 PDT PM



(FOTOLIA)

Spring has sprung and with it comes thoughts of spring cleaning, both of household and body.

According to traditional Chinese medicine principles, this is the season most connected to working on liver and gallbladder issues, so now is a great time to do a cleanse.

Our chemical world has brought us many perks and conveniences, but unfortunately many of those chemicals have found their way into our bodies, contributing to allergies, cancer, infertility, asthma, birth defects, neurological disorders, and more.

Even if you do not drink alcohol, do drugs, smoke, eat processed foods, or take medications, even if you only eat organic food, drink filtered water, and live in the countryside; you are still exposed to chemicals daily.

They are the flame retardants in your furniture, carpets, TVs, computers and cars. They are in the plastics that you wrap your food in, brush your teeth with, and the phone you press against your face. We have a heavier toxin burden than ever before, so regular support of our natural detoxification systems, including our liver, is important.

Water is needed to move waste products out of your cells and out of your body, so drink at least 1.75 litres daily, choosing room temperature or warmer water and drinking it between meals.

Because sour is the flavour TCM connects to the liver, squeeze fresh lemon or add a tablespoon of apple cider vinegar to your water and drink it first thing in the morning. Bored of water? Try a detoxifying drink like dandelion tea to support liver function.

The liver season of spring brings more green, so eat more greens to benefit the liver. Leafy green foods, such as Swiss chard, kale, arugula, mustard greens, watercress and parsley, among others, can be eaten steamed or in salads, soups, stews and shakes.

Artichokes contain silymarin, the same component as the liver-cleansing herb milk thistle, and cruciferous vegetables like broccoli, brussels sprouts, and kohlrabi help produce more liver enzymes needed for detoxification.

Acupuncture can support whole body systems — including the liver, kidneys, lymphatic system and bowels — while Chinese herbs such as pu gong ying (dandelion), chai hu (bupleurum), and niu bang gen (burdock root) are a few herbs that might be included in a customized herbal formula to help your body remove toxins.

Start with reducing your toxic load and add in a spring cleanse to improve your health for now and your future.

Melissa Carr is a doctor of traditional Chinese medicine, caring for patients in an integrative medicine clinic in Vancouver.

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