

Move over festive boozing and overindulgence. January's here – and detoxing is the flavour of the month, writes ABI JACKSON

A time to cleanse

DO a quick poll among your colleagues or friends right now and chances are some will be attempting (or talking about attempting) some sort of detox.

It's no surprise really. The average person in the UK reportedly consumed around 6,000 calories on Christmas Day and adding up all the food and drink before and after, it's no wonder many of us feel monumentally sluggish and bloated come January.

We're also somewhat conditioned to see the New Year as an opportunity to turn ourselves into 'new and improved' versions, which usually means slimmer, fitter and more energised.

Detoxing may seem like a recent celeb-fueled phenomenon, or just a fancy word for dieting, but many of the principles and methods can be traced back thousands of years, for instance in Ayurvedic Indian and Chinese medicine.

The Ancient Egyptians were fans of colonic irrigation and fasting has been around since the dawn of time, for both religious and health reasons.

While weight loss is often cited as a key motivation, and indeed one of the rewards, detox devotees will tell you the benefits are far wider.

As the name suggests, the basic principle is to eliminate toxins – chemicals absorbed through food and drink, cosmetic and cleaning products, the atmosphere around us – from the body.

Methods of achieving this range from more extreme (like 10-day liquid-only fasts) to moderate three or seven-day plans, with specific food types (such as refined sugars, dairy and junk foods), alcohol and caffeine banned. And while elimination is often the focus, adding more 'good stuff' to the system features in many plans too, such as juicing, where nutrient-packed juices replace meals.

As well as feeling and looking physically better and healthier, fans say they feel mentally re-charged after a detox too.

"The key principles for me are to clean the system," says Fiona Robertson, 48, who runs detox holidays at Retreat Biarritz (www.retreat-biarritz.com). "Firstly by returning to a simple cleansing diet, introducing more vegetables and fruits in the way of juices."

"Secondly to clean the digestive system and re-set your body's way to eliminate old waste and toxins from you on a cellular level."

"Once you eliminate toxins and old waste successfully, your skin will glow and your eyes will sparkle; your insides are the barometer for what you see and how you feel on the outside."

"I see skin complaints, such as eczema, go away, digestion problems clear up, constipation sort itself out, huge mood changes correct themselves, from depressed and overwhelmed to positive and focused."

"Your looks can also really change as the skin becomes radiant and glows with inner health."

"Weight loss is often the initial interest for people who want to detox at this time of year, but there are so many benefits. As once you start to clean up your act, everything changes and gets better and falls into place including your weight which naturally balances out."

James Griffiths, founder of Wild Training (www.wildtraining.co.uk), a fitness franchise which also runs retreats incorporating exercise, detox and relaxation, is another advocate.

"The first week of our food plan is what we call our elimination plan," explains Griffiths, 26. "It removes all the bad stuff from people's diets that slow their metabolisms down, makes them store fat and reduces energy levels."



Many of us see the New Year as an opportunity to turn ourselves into a new and improved version.

"Detoxing does work but there are healthy ways to reduce the level of toxins in your body and other more dangerous strategies," he adds. "Your liver deals with a lot of toxins and can swell up to four times its normal size if we consume the wrong nutrition. Once your liver can't take anymore, your body starts storing toxins you can't process in your bum, thighs and, most often, abdominal area. There is a reason it's called a beer belly!"

"If you reduce or cut out alcohol, caffeine and refined sugars, you might feel heavy for a day or two, depending on how bad you normally are, but before long you will feel awesome. Clear head, better sleeps, more energy, clearer skin and eyes."

"You can also look at reducing dairy and grain intake as these foods can often slow down your digestion because we aren't very good at digesting them."

For lots of people, in January especially, reducing alcohol intake is another big appeal of the detox, which in itself can be a great health boost – both inside and out.

Dr Sarah Jarvis, medical adviser for Drinkaware (www.drinkaware.co.uk), says: "Depending on how much you're drinking, you may notice numerous benefits from stopping even for a short time. You're likely to sleep better and feel more rested when you wake up; you may have more energy; your skin will look less sallow and tired."

"It also won't take long for you to lose weight – a large glass of wine has almost 200 calories, and a new report by the World Cancer Research Fund suggests that about 10 per cent of average calorie intake among people who drink comes from alcohol."

Dr Jarvis warns that people shouldn't be fooled into thinking that a short-term detox 'undoes' the damage of longer-term bad habits.

"One of the problems of 'detoxing' from alcohol is that many people believe that if they stop drinking for a month, it cancels out any ill effects from drinking over the recommended limits for the other 11 months a year. That's simply not how it works," she says. "If you're drinking within recommended limits, your liver is 'detoxing' – filtering the toxins in alcohol from your body – all the time, and you don't need to stop for a month."



Gray's dedication to his art has led to him being recognised as one of the UK's top tattoo artists.

Why it's vital to get the whole tattoo picture



(Above) The original Koi carp tattoo which Hannah hated. She paid £700 in total to have it covered up with a new design (right).



There's no doubt that getting a tattoo has soared in popularity in recent years. But it's essential to do your homework and properly check out who'll be creating your artwork before you go under the needle. LYNETTE PINCHES reports

HANNAH Philbey sobbed her heart out as she looked at what should have been a Koi carp tattoo on her thigh.

"Well, maybe a Koi with a broken neck and skin problem. I felt like I had so stupidly disfigured my body," she says.

No stranger to tattoos and piercings, Hannah, 27, paid £200 to a tattooist outside Notts, but the end result wasn't what she was anticipating.

Hannah, who was 24 at the time, adds: "I just looked at myself, thinking what had I done? All I could think was that I would not be seen dead in a bikini with that monstrosity on my leg. It made me so self-conscious."

Hannah, an office manager, called the studio and complained but was told it was part of a layering process and she would need more sessions.

"I didn't want that tattooist anywhere near me ever again."

"I immediately started doing my research, something in hindsight I should have done before and contacting what I considered to be excellent artists after browsing their portfolios online."

After a recommendation from a friend, Hannah and her boyfriend looked into the work of Gray



Hannah Philbey with tattooist Gray Silva at Rampant Ink, Netherfield, where Hannah had a cover-up tattoo done.

Silva at Rampant Ink in Netherfield, and chose his studio to carry out cover-up work on the tattoo.

But first, Hannah had to have laser treatment to lift some of the black ink from the tattoo.

Gray covered the image – which measured 25cm by 15cm – with a flaming 8 ball with roses and cherry blossom.

The whole process took five sessions – ten hours in total – and cost £700.

"I am so much happier and confidently strut my stuff in a bikini now. It's not something I would have originally picked to have, but having to cover such a large badly done tattoo restricted what could be done," says Hannah.

Her experience has not put her off tattoos and she has since had numerous done by Gray on her back, chest, thigh and stomach.

However, her advice to anyone thinking of having a tattoo is to carry out research.

"And I mean really research. If you are on Facebook and Instagram, check out UK Top Tattoo Artists."

"Also get yourself to some tattoo conventions. The atmosphere is amazing and you'll see the artists in action."

"I see so many people with awful tattoos and it breaks my heart. I have had people shocked at what I pay for a tattoo but a good artist is worth it."

"The old adage 'you get what you pay for' is so true. That said, just because they are expensive does not make them good. Always try to view pictures of healed work as well as fresh work."

Gray Silva's dedication to his art has led to him being recognised as one of the UK's top tattoo artists.

His studio has seen an increasing number of people who have had work done by "scratchers" – individuals who buy poor quality tattoo equipment from the internet and produce inferior work from their bedrooms or kitchens – or by studios whose tattooists haven't served any kind of apprenticeship.

If tattooists work from home with equipment



Hannah and Gray discuss the studio's tattoo designs.

which hasn't been sterilised properly, there is a risk from diseases such as hepatitis, HIV and Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease.

The award-winning artists at Rampant Ink have served a minimum of four years as an apprentice before they're allowed to tattoo customers.

Gray says: "Not only do these scratchers present a significant risk to their clients' health by not adhering to any hygiene practices, they also produce poorly executed tattoos."

"These customers come to us to have their existing tattoos re-worked, covered up or removed completely using laser treatment."

"The demand for laser removal has risen dramatically as increasing numbers of inexperienced individuals attempt to cash in on the popularity of tattooing."

He reiterated Hannah's advice about research. "Ensure that your chosen studio is health authority registered and that they can show you a good portfolio of work."

And he added: "Don't go for the cheapest option, you'll always pay the price."

Legal position

TATTOO studios must register with their local council – both the premises and the tattooist.

And that goes for any activity which pierces the skin such as ear piercing, electrolysis and acupuncture.

An inspection will be carried out by an environmental health officer from the local council at the time of opening but premises are not subjected to an annual routine inspection – only if there has been a complaint or a risk has been identified.

It is illegal for under 18s to be tattooed and new guidelines suggest that a tattoo artist should ask to see proof of age and record this before agreeing to tattoo as they would be the one committing the offence – not the teenager.

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