

# A clean start



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

Do a quick poll among your colleagues or friends right now and the 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 consumes around 6,000 calories on Christmas Day, not to mention all those mince pies and eggnogs beforehand. With far more booze and sugar on the menu than usual, and feasts that require belt removal and a lie-down afterwards, no wonder many of us are feeling 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, more energised, healthier, glowing versions of our exhausted, slothful selves.

Detoxing may seem like a recent celeb-fuelled phenomenon, or just a fancy word for dieting, but that's not really the case.

Celebrities have no doubt helped make the detox more mainstream (sales of Madal Bal syrup, used to create the maple syrup/lemon detox drinks, sky-rocketed after pop star Beyonce revealed she'd followed the regime to shed weight for her *Dreamgirls* film role in 2006), 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 (the ultimate internal cleanse), 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 ten-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.

"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."

Robertson's first encounter with detoxing was during a trip to Thailand in 2003, in

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search of an experience she'd "never get at home".

"I walked into a bar and saw a leaflet proposing a detox experience and I thought, I must try that – I'll never do that again. How wrong I was! I experienced a lift in energy, a clear mind, became really focused. I made some major decisions in my life that were to bring me to where I am today, running a business helping people detox, helping them gain

more energy than they've ever experienced before."

Robertson isn't a qualified dietician, but she's so passionate about detoxing that her holiday experience has become a way of life, and the testimonials of her clients reinforce her beliefs.

"It is really very satisfying and rewarding, as 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, 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. 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."

## Western Daily Press

### Olympic legacy in action

It has been an extraordinary year for Great Britain's dressage stars.

Our national team, featuring a talented contingent of West Country riders, enjoyed a sensational Greenwich Park gold rush in the summer, making Olympic history and, crucially, blazing a trail for the next crop of international stars.

As we report today, the 2013-2015 World Class Development

Programme has been announced by the British Equestrian Federation, and nine riders from Wiltshire, Somerset, Herefordshire and Dorset feature in the 49-strong list, including the programme's youngest member, showjumper Jessica Mendoza 16, from Lyneham. We can only wonder at the potential this up and coming group of athletes may have – and hope and

trust they will be coached so expertly that every ounce of that potential is realised in the Olympic arenas of the future.

They have ample inspiration, that's for sure. Back in the summer, barely 24 hours after British showjumpers Nick Skelton, Ben Maher, Scott Brash and Peter Charles won a first Olympic gold for 60 years, the dressage team followed suit.

Our Gloucestershire trio – Carl Hester, Laura Bechtolsheimer and Charlotte Dujardin – are not only Olympic champions, they also journeyed where no other British dressage team had gone before by simply winning a medal.

Their achievement was all the more extraordinary when you remember that although dressage first became an Olympic sport

100 years ago, Britain had never finished higher than sixth in team or individual competitions – until London 2012.

Hester, Bechtolsheimer and Dujardin achieved another valuable breakthrough for the sport – by helping dispel the idea that the equestrian world is aloof, elitist and the preserve only of the rich.

Suddenly, thanks to the

down-to-earth charm of the sport's Gloucestershire connection and their jaw-dropping success on the world stage, they have, in one fell swoop, intoxicated a generation of youngsters – inspiring them to become world beaters as well. To see the first wave of hopefuls take their initial step towards fulfilling that dream today suggests the Olympic legacy is well and truly alive.