

'Detox' is new buzz word

News-Times, The (Danbury, CT)

Published 8:00 pm, Tuesday, October 9, 2007

This may be a familiar sign at an industrial plant, but many common everyday products can also be toxic to the body. The buzz word in health right now is "detox," and it's the concept of cleaning out and cleansing the body. Toxins enter the body at conception, and every day in the water and food you ingest. "People need to be aware of their total body burden," says Dr. Tamara Sachs, a functional medicine practitioner in New Milford. "Total body burden is defined as your exposure to toxins while in the womb and lifetime exposures minus what your body eliminates through life. Personal genetics and the ability of your body to eliminate toxins is incredibly variable. That variation in genetics is coming to light." Sachs cites a number of published research studies and Web sites that are delving into the world of undetectable persistent organic pollutants. They include jet fuel, plastics, Teflon, lead, pesticides and mercury. In a study at www.ewg.org (Environmental Working Group), researchers at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health tested newborn umbilical cord blood. Traces of a Teflon chemical called perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) were found in 99 percent of 300 newborn babies. PFOA is a suspected cancer-causing agent used in the manufacture of non-stick pans, computer chips, cell phones and other numerous consumer products. In another study, newborn umbilical cord blood tested positive for about 200 chemicals per baby. They included jet fuel, plastic, Teflon, lead, pesticides and mercury. Yet another study, published in the *Diabetes Care Journal* 2006 (vol. 29), showed subjects with pesticide exposure above 90 percent as compared to those with a low exposure had a 38 fold incidence of Type II Diabetes. Researchers concluded that obesity is not a risk factor for Type II Diabetes in subjects with undetectable persistent organic pollutants. They also determined obesity is a vehicle for toxic chemicals. "The health concern is huge and diabetes will be the next global epidemic if this persists," says Sachs. More studies need to be done on toxins and their synergistic effects with other chemicals. Some toxins can act like hormones and can disrupt body mechanisms. "Sperm counts are down 40 percent across the country. That should be front page news," she says, "and we're seeing an increasing number of birth defects in frogs and fish." In terms of obesity, Sachs says there's a subsection of people who can't lose weight. "The body will hold onto fat to dilute the toxins. A simple way to put it, dilution is the solution to pollution." Sachs, who combines traditional and alternative health care principals to combat illness, says detoxifying is not a simple process and is not the same for everyone. She stresses the elderly and people on medication, as well as the general population should consult with a nutritionally-minded health professional. "Detox is a multi-step process and should begin basic, then can get more intensive if necessary." Sachs explains the goal is to minimize exposure to toxins and maximize your body's ability to handle existing and daily exposures. One step is to minimize plastics. "You should never ever microwave plastics," she says. "Use ceramic or glass. Never freeze or heat plastic water bottles. Use them once and throw away because toxins can leech into the beverage." While some studies dispute the dangers of microwaving plastics, Sax says to avoid them. She also says it's virtually impossible to completely eliminate plastics in your everyday life; Sachs has tried. As you go through your day tomorrow, notice how many you use. According to Sax, another everyday product to avoid is just about anything with an odor. "This would include things like scented candles, dryer sheets, bug sprays, weed killers and paint thinners," says Sachs. Eating certain foods is a healthy way to combat toxins. Fruits, vegetables and berries are the staples. High quality lean protein should also be on top of the list, including hormone-free eggs, whey, amino acid supplements and free-range organic turkey and chicken. "Minimizing exposure is an ongoing process that must be supported every day," Sachs adds. More healthy habits include exercise every day and drinking plenty of water. Sachs recommends spring or filtered. "If you don't sweat or are constipated, the toxins in your body are re-circulated," says Sachs. Her top recommendation is use of a sauna. "Heavy metals like mercury, lead and arsenic, as well as petrochemicals can be successfully eliminated by sauna." Additional Web sites for more information include www.ourstolenfuture.org and www.environmentalhealthnews.org "The sites are a place for scientists to record their findings," says Sachs. I say being armed with information makes you a better consumer. Eliminate toxic thoughts and toxic relationships. "It's overall toxicity that can lead to metabolic and immune disorders, general pain and fatigue and resistant weight loss," adds Sachs. Limit toxins and sneakers on! Did you know? Now is the time to build up your immune system, before cold and flu season hits. Eat foods high in vitamin C and stay hydrated with plenty of water. Those foods include papaya, red pepper, broccoli, brussel sprouts, strawberries, oranges, kiwi and cauliflower!

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