

Back to School, Back to Health



By Dr. Jean-Jacques Dugoua

The summer is a time to kick back and relax. You've probably spent lazy days napping in the sun, swinging in a hammock by the lake and enjoying the culinary treats of summer, e.g. the barbeque. Now that it's back to school time, what classes will you be taking for your health?

Summer Cleaning

Healthy habits should be part of everyday life. Over the summer, however, the 80/20 rule (80% good and 20% bad habits) seems to lean more on the unhealthy side. Overindulgence in sweets, processed food and charred meat, along with smoking tobacco and consuming alcohol are all common habits of the vacationer. Why not plan a cleanse and detoxification for September?

Detoxification 101

Detoxification therapy, often called a "detox", involves ridding the body of various toxins absorbed from our environment, including water, air, food and the workplace. Toxins alter the body's metabolism and cause enzyme dysfunction, nutritional deficiencies, hormonal imbalances and damage to the immune system, all of which contribute to physiological and psychological decline.

A detoxification program usually involves a specific hypoallergenic diet for a number of days and supplements that improve the liver's ability to metabolize toxins. Supplements, such as milk thistle, have been shown to have a protective effect on the liver.

One study reported that in patients exposed to contaminants, taking milk thistle improved liver function tests and platelet count (blood cells require for clotting blood).

Shedding some extra baggage

Although we tend to exercise more in the summer versus the winter, summer eating habits often lead to putting on some extra pounds. With good nutrition and regular exercise, those extra pounds can often be shed. Weight loss supplements, such as conjugated linoleic acid (CLA), can also keep you trim.

Conjugated linoleic acid (CLA)

CLA (TrueABS) is a fatty acid that is found mainly in dairy products, but also in beef, poultry, eggs, and corn oil. In animal studies, supplementing with CLA was shown to reduce body fat content, decrease lipid deposition in the aorta and improve blood lipid profile. In a human study, fifty-three healthy men and women, aged 23-63 years, were randomly assigned to either receive CLA or a placebo. After 12 weeks, the proportion of body fat decreased in individuals taking CLA. The researchers concluded that supplementation with CLA may reduce the proportion of body fat in humans and that CLA affects fatty acid metabolism.