Detox Product Dictionary

Each entry gives: what the product is, what it promises, the book's main claim with its label, the cost, and the chapter with sources. A label applies only to the claim just before it. The dictionary names no brands. Ingredients and rules vary between countries and companies.

Activated charcoal. Specially treated charcoal powder or capsules; the only item in the detox basket used in emergency rooms, for some drug poisonings. Reduces hangovers or "detoxes" you after a party **(▮▯▯▯Unproven)**. Barely binds alcohol; can stop oral medicines working, including birth control pills. $. Chapters 2, 5.

Chelation therapy for "detox." Metal-binding drugs, given by IV or by mouth, sold to "remove heavy metals" after a "provoked" urine test. Real treatment for confirmed metal poisoning, given in hospital. Outside that, it can make blood calcium drop, causing heart rhythm problems and death. $$$. Chapter 3.

Colon cleanses, enemas, colon hydrotherapy. Water flushed into the large intestine to "clear out sludge." The gut doesn't build up "sludge" the way the ads show. Can cause dehydration, electrolyte problems and, rarely, bowel injury. $$ to $$$. Chapter 2.

"Detox" fasting. Skipping meals, or having only water or juice for a few days after the holidays. Leads to lasting fat loss **(▮▯▯▯Unproven)**. The weight lost is mostly water. Dangerous for people on insulin or a sulfonylurea; can raise uric acid for a while in people with gout; not suitable for anyone with a history of an eating disorder. Free, but not without cost. Chapters 2, 7, 8, 12.

"Detox" and "cleansing" teas. Tea bags promising a flat stomach and a "clean gut." Many contain a stimulant laxative (often senna) or a diuretic. Taken for days, they can cause dehydration and low potassium, dangerous for people with heart or kidney disease. $. Chapter 2.

Detox products in general. Any diet or product promising to "remove toxins" without naming a toxin. Removes toxins from the body (**Unproven**). Ask the five questions in Chapter 2 before buying. Chapters 1, 2.

Electrolyte drinks. Water with added minerals and sugar. Marketed for hangovers and "fast rehydration." No trials show they beat water for an ordinary hangover; useful after a lot of vomiting. $. Chapter 5.

"Hangover" and "anti-hangover" pills. Supplements promising to prevent or cure a hangover. No medicine or supplement has been reliably shown to cure or prevent a hangover (**Moderate evidence**). $ to $$. Chapter 5.

IV vitamin drips. Bags of vitamin-containing fluid given into a vein at "drip bars." Do more than drinking water and eating normally in healthy people (**Unproven**). Extra vitamins leave in urine. $$$. Chapters 2, 5.

Juice and smoothie cleanses. Packs of juices or smoothies that replace meals for a few days. Short detox diets lead to lasting weight loss (**Unproven**). High in sugar, very low in protein. Concentrated smoothies made from high-oxalate vegetables have caused acute kidney failure in a few reported cases. $$ to $$$. Chapters 2, 8.

Milk thistle. A herb common in "liver support" and "liver detox" pills. Helps the liver recover from drinking in healthy people (**Unproven**). Even in people with liver disease, a systematic review found no clear benefit. $$. Chapter 2.

"Provoked" urine metal tests. Taking a chelating pill, then collecting urine for hours to measure heavy metals; often the first step of a "metal detox" package. "Provoked" urine testing can't be used to diagnose heavy-metal poisoning (**Moderate evidence**). Almost everyone comes out "high." $$. Chapter 3.

Sauna "sweat detox." Sweat is mostly for cooling, not a major route for removing toxins. It can be relaxing, but it doesn't replace

what your liver and kidneys do. Drink enough water, and avoid it straight after drinking alcohol. $ to $$. Chapters 1, 2.

"Toxin-drawing" foot pads. Pads worn overnight on the soles of the feet that change color by morning. Draw toxins out of the body **(Unproven)**. $. Chapter 2.

"Uric acid flush" drinks and pills. Cherry juice, apple cider vinegar, lemon water and supplements recommended for gout flares. Juices, apple cider vinegar or supplements stop a gout flare **(Unproven)**. A flare needs medicine prescribed by a doctor. $ to $$. Chapter 7.