

Clearing out summer's heat for winter's health...

Kristine Backes, MA

An ancient healing traditions such as Ayurveda see the transitions between the seasons as an opportunity to pause, take a break, and clear out imbalances accumulated in the previous few months. Much as we love our summers here in Montana, the long days, high temperatures and intense activity can result in excess heat lodging in our bodies.

In Ayurvedic teaching, any substance we take into our bodies that is not completely digested and either assimilated or eliminated can become a toxin, called “ama”. Ama tends to collect first in the digestive system, then spill over into the parts of the body in which we are uniquely vulnerable. In the case of an overabundance of fire, we may notice it in a number of ways, such as inflammation, digestive upset, or joint pain. Over time, short-term accumulations become long-term imbalances, contributing to chronic conditions such as arthritis, headaches and even fall flu episodes and spring-time allergies as the body tries to clear out what it perceives as toxins.

In my case, my enthusiasm to cram in as much sun-time and hill-climbing as I can in a short summer can find its way into my knees as soreness and swelling,

or result in insomnia. Couple the activity with a little alcohol, sugar and a late meal of fish and chips, and my digestion can begin to feel overloaded and over-reactive.

A simple, gentle way to help the body rebalance itself and clear out ama is through a seasonal cleanse based on Ayurvedic practices. The protocol I offer my clients describes a few days of lighter activity (including work if possible); “fasting” from most outside stimulation such as news and social media; and an easy-to-digest mono-diet of kitchari, which is a simple stew of split mung beans and basmati rice. Unlike some other cleanse procedures, the approach I recommend does not involve adding the stress of going without food, taking lots of supplements and herbs, or aggressive means of clearing out the digestive tract.

Because we digest everything we take in through all of our senses during the course of a day—sights, sounds, emotions, sensations—detoxification works best when we reduce all the inputs and allow ourselves to truly rest. This is why an effective detox program includes lots of rest, gentle movement, and reduced screen time. Our

bodies know how to detoxify and heal when we give them the space to do so.

It's easy to try a gentle Ayurvedic detox at home by simply clearing your calendar for a day or two and eating a simple, light diet. There are kitchari recipes available on the internet or in any Ayurvedic cookbook. Both Yoga Journal and Banyan

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Botanicals offer excellent online articles including recipes and the 'how-to' of cleansing.

If you want the support of a group, Livingston's Pura Vida 406 Salon and Spa and I are offering a detox and renewal series consisting of two afternoon classes, a cleanse book with recipes and guidelines, a 30-minute tension-releasing session, 30-minute sauna, and an optional 30-minute massage. For more individualized support, a one-on-one detoxification and renewal consultation package is available any time of year. More information on either option is available at PuraVida406.com.

As you enjoy the remainder of our mountain summer, make the time to incorporate a little rest into your summer fun and support your body's natural health. ■

For more on how living in harmony with nature can support your creative energy and health, e-mail Kristine at kristine@kristinebackes.com or call (406) 222-5271. In Livingston, visit Pura Vida 406 Salon & Day Spa on the corner of Park and Main.



Kristine Backes offers consultations, workshops and mentoring rooted in nature-based healing traditions. She loves to show people how to listen

to their own wisdom by moving in closer harmony with nature. Kristine holds a master's degree in organizational leadership and is a registered yoga teacher.



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