The Detox and Cleanse Danger: What Your Kidneys Really Need Transcript

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Introduction to Kidney Detox Myths

Walk into any health food store, scroll through Instagram or check out your local pharmacy and you'll see them everywhere. Bottles promising to cleanse your kidneys, flush out toxins or detoxify your body naturally.

The packaging looks clean, wholesome with images of herbs and leaves. The word natural is plastered across the label and they're flying off the shelves.

The detox and cleanse industry is worth billions of dollars and it's only growing. But here's what most people don't know. That bottle of natural kidney detox sitting on your shelf might be doing more harm than good.

And your kidneys? The very organs these products claim to protect could be the ones paying the price. I'm talking to you today because as a kidney doctor, I see the aftermath.

I see patients who thought they were doing something healthy for their bodies only to end up with kidney damage that could have been prevented. So let's pull back the curtain on these so-called natural detox products and talk what's really going on.

I'm Dr. Vesmair Phan, a physician on a mission to help you break free from symptom management and step into a life of thriving health. Together we will uncover simple, powerful ways to prevent disease, restore energy and take control of your health naturally.

If you're ready to stop managing illness and start building vitality, you are in the right place. Your prescription for vitality starts now. First, let's address the fundamental misunderstanding here.

Your body doesn't need to be detoxed in the way these products claim.

How the Body Actually Detoxifies

You already have a sophisticated, highly efficient detoxification system working 24×7 – your liver and kidneys. Your liver processes nutrients and breaks down harmful substances into forms that can either be used by your body or eliminated.

Your kidneys filter about 200 quarts of blood every single day, removing waste products and excess substance through urine. These organs are incredibly good at what they do, and they don't need a $40 bottle of pills to help them along.

Think about it this way. Your liver and kidneys are like a state-of-the-art water filtration system. They're constantly working, constantly filtering, and constantly processing.

Now, would pouring random chemicals into that system make it work better? Of course not. But that's essentially what many detox products do. They add substances that your organs then have to process, creating more work rather than less.

Here's where it gets concerning. The supplement industry in US operates in a regulatory gray zone that most people don't understand. When you see those detox products on store shelves, you probably assume someone, the FDA, maybe have tested them and approved them as safe.

That's what most people think. In fact, a recent survey found that about half of American adults believed the FDA reviews supplements before they hit the market.

But that's not a truth. Under the Dietary Supplement Health and Education Act of 1994, supplements are classified as food products, not drugs. What this means in practice is that manufacturers don't have to prove their products are safe or effective before they're selling them.

Supplement Regulation and Hidden Risks

They don't have to disclose all their ingredients. They don't even have to tell the FDA that their product exists. Between 1994 and now, the number of supplement products has exploded from 4,000 to over 80,000. That's an industry growing largely unchecked.

Let me share something that happened in my practice recently. A woman in her early 50s came to see me because her routine blood work showed her kidney function had dropped significantly over the past year.

She was confused and scared. She'd been feeling fine, eating well, exercising regularly. As we talked through her health history, she mentioned she started taking a kidney cleanse supplement she found online.

The product promised to flush toxins and improve kidney health naturally. She'd been taking it faithfully for 8 months. When we looked at the ingredient list, it contained a combination of herbs, some I recognized and some I didn't.

After doing some more research, we discovered that one of the herbs had been linked to kidney damage in medical literature. She thought that she was helping her kidneys and helping her body.

Instead, she was slowly harming them. The frustrating part? This information wasn't on the label. There was no warning, just promises of better health.

And she's not alone. Research has shown that at least one in 12 American adults takes botanical supplements that are known to cause kidney damage. One study looking at emergency department visits found that supplements were responsible for about 23,000 annual visits with over 2,000 resulting in hospitalization.

Weight loss and energy supplements caused 71% of these adverse effects, including serious issues like heart palpitations and organ damage. Now before you think this is just about pills and capsules, let me tell you about another natural detox trend that's incredibly popular right now.

Juice cleansers. You have probably seen them all over social media. Influencers promoting 7 day juice fast, beautiful photos of green juices promising to detoxify your body and reset your system.

It looks healthy, right? Pure fruits and vegetables, nothing artificial, but here's what happened to a patient I saw not too long ago. A man in his 60s with chronic kidney disease came to me wanting to improve his kidney function.

He had been doing some research online and decided to try a juice cleanse. He figured that if he flooded his body with nutrients from fresh fruits and vegetables, it would only help his kidneys heal.

Kidney Damage From Detox Supplements

He started drinking multiple large glasses of fresh juice throughout the day. Kale, spinach, carrots, beets, orange. All things we typically think of as healthy.

Seven days into his cleanse, he started feeling increasingly tired and fatigued. His family noticed he seemed confused and his heart rate was irregular.

They brought him to the emergency room and when the doctors checked his labs, they found his potassium level was 8. To put that in perspective, normal potassium is between 3.5 to 5, and above 6 is considered dangerous.

At 8, potassium can cause fatal heart arrhythmias, and the heart can even stop. The ER team had to do oxygen

dialysis to bring his potassium level down.

This wasn't a chronic problem requiring long-term dialysis. This was an acute, life-threatening emergency caused by his juice cleanse. So what happened?

Well, when your kidneys aren't working properly, they can't efficiently remove excess potassium from your blood. Normally, healthy kidneys handle this beautifully.

But when kidney function is compromised, potassium builds up and fruits and vegetables, especially the ones popular in juice cleansers like oranges, spinach, kale, celery, beets are extremely high in potassium.

When you juice these foods, you're concentrating that potassium into a liquid form that gets absorbed quickly. One large glass of green juice can contain as much potassium as eating several servings of vegetables.

And when you are drinking multiple glasses a day, you are overwhelming your kidneys' ability to process and eliminate. The tragic irony is that this man was trying to help his kidneys.

He thought he was doing something healthy and natural. And in someone with perfectly healthy kidneys, that juice cleanse might not have caused a problem.

But for someone with kidney disease, it nearly killed him. This is what I mean when I say natural doesn't equal safe. Fruits and vegetables are nutritious and important for health.

But context matters. The dose matters. Your individual kidney function matters. What works for a healthy influencer on Instagram might be dangerous for you.

Juice Cleanses and Potassium Danger

Now, you might be thinking, but these are natural herbs that have been used for centuries. And that's partly true. But natural doesn't mean safe and traditional use doesn't guarantee that something won't harm you when taken in concentrated supplement form or combined with other herbs.

Let me tell you about aristologic acid. This compound is found in certain plants that have been used in traditional medicine for centuries. in Ayurvedic medicine, in Chinese medicine, and even in European herbal traditions.

For thousands of years, people used these plants without recognizing their toxicity. It wasn't until the 1990s that Belgian researchers discovered something alarming.

Over a hundred women attending a weight loss clinic developed rapidly progressing kidney failure. And after taking supplements containing Aristolochia, many needed dialysis or kidney transplant.

Several went on to develop cancers of the urinary tract. The scary part? The damage was painless. These women felt fine while their kidneys were being destroyed.

They didn't connect taking the supplement with kidney failure until years later when the damage was already done. This case led to bans of aristolo acid-containing products in many countries.

But you know you can still find these compounds in some traditional remedies sold in the US and online. That's how inadequate our regulation is. Here's another troubling reality.

Many supplements don't even contain what their labels say they contain. Some include pharmaceutical drugs that aren't listed. A study published in JAMA found that more than 700 dietary supplements sold between 2007 and 2016 contained pharmaceutical ingredients like Viagra or anabolic steroids that were never disclosed on the label.

Other supplements are contained like heavy metals or pesticides or other toxins. Some contain none of the active

ingredients they claim to have. The dose is very widely between batches because there's no standardization requirement.

For people with existing kidney disease, this is especially dangerous. Your kidneys are already working harder than they should be. Many herbs and supplements are processed through the kidneys.

And if your kidney function is compromised, these substances can build up to toxic levels in your body. Even things that seem completely healthy, like fruit juice, can become dangerous when kidney function is reduced.

I have seen patients whose kidney disease progressed faster because they were taking natural supplements. They thought that would help. I've seen medication interactions that landed people in hospital.

Why Natural Remedies Can Still Be Toxic

I've also seen toxic levels of minerals like potassium or phosphorus from supplements and juice cleansers marketed as healthy promoting. The marketing is particularly insidious because it plays a very real desire to take control of our health.

The idea of cleansing or detoxifying feels so proactive. It feels like you're doing something good to your body. These companies use language like flush out your toxins, purify your kidneys, support health detoxification.

They show images of pristine nature and make promises about renewed energy and vitality. Juice Cleanse programs talk about resetting your body and eliminating years of buildup.

But here's what they're not telling you. There's limited to no scientific evidence supporting the effectiveness of these products. The National Kidney Foundation explicitly warns against teas and supplements marketed as kidney detoxes or cleanses, noting that some ingredients can interact with medications or damage your kidneys.

So what should you do instead? If you're genuinely concerned about supporting your kidney health, focus on what actually works. Stay hydrated with plain water.

Your kidneys need adequate fluid to filter blood and produce urine effectively. Eat a balanced diet rich in fruits and vegetables, whole grains and lean proteins.

But eat them as whole foods, not concentrated juices, especially if you have any kidney concerns. Control your blood pressure and your blood sugar if you have hypertension or diabetes as these are the leading causes of kidney disease.

Don't smoke. Limit alcohol consumption. Exercise regularly. Get adequate sleep. These aren't exciting or sexy recommendations, but they are what the science actually supports.

If you're taking medications that might affect your kidneys, like NSAIDs such as ibuprofen, certain antibiotics or contrast dyes for imaging studies, talk to your doctor about monitoring your kidney function.

These are known risks that can be managed with proper medical supervision. And here's something important. Your kidneys don't need you to help them detoxify unless there is a specific medical problem.

If your kidney function is declining, that's not something a supplement or juice cleanse will fix.

Safer Ways to Support Kidney Health

That requires proper medical evaluation to identify the root cause, whether it is autoimmune disease, chronic inflammation, diabetes, hypertension, genetic factors, or something else.

And then addressing that underlying issue with a comprehensive approach. If you're already taking supplements or

considering a juice cleanse and you're concerned, the first step is to be honest with your physician.

Bring in the bottles. Tell them about any cleanses you're planning. Show them exactly what you're talking and you're taking, including the doses. Many doctors don't ask about supplements unless you volunteer the information.

But they need to know because these products can interact with your medications and affect your test results. Look, I understand the appeal of natural solutions.

I really do. My own health journey taught me the power of addressing root causes and using nutrition and lifestyle interventions to support healing. But there is a huge difference between eating anti-inflammatory whole foods as part of a balanced diet and doing extreme juice cleanses or taking concentrated supplements that promise miracles.

There is a difference between supporting your body's natural processes and overwhelming your organs with substances they have to process. The detox industry has convinced us that we need to constantly be cleansing, purifying, flushing.

But the truth is, if your organs are healthy, they're already doing this work beautifully without any intervention. And if your organs aren't healthy, they need proper medical care, not expensive products with unregulated ingredients or extreme dietary protocols.

Before I wrap up, I want to be clear about one thing. I'm not against all supplements or saying you should never have juice. There are specific situations where supplementations make sense, like vitamin D or someone who is deficient or B12 for certain conditions, and enjoying a fresh juice occasionally as part of a varied diet is fine for most people.

But these should be informed choices based on your individual health status, not extreme protocols based on marketing promises. If you are interested in truly supporting your kidney health and you want a more personalized approach that looks at your unique situation, your labs, your symptoms, and your root causes, we offer consultation at Holistic Kidney Institute.

Final Takeaways and Closing Message

We use comprehensive testing to identify what's actually going on with your body and create protocols based on real evidence and your individual needs.

You can learn more at DrBisma.com. The bottom line is this, your kidneys are remarkable organs that don't need detoxing. What they need is support through healthy diet lifestyle changes, proper medical care when issues arise.

Don't let misleading marketing convince you otherwise. The best thing you can do for your kidneys is to understand how they actually work, avoid things that are known to harm them, and seek evidence-based care when needed.

Natural isn't always safe, expensive doesn't mean effective, and your health is too important to gamble on products or protocols that make big promises with no proof to back them up.

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