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HEALTHWISE

Who says you need to hover near the bathroom to cleanse successfully?
Megan Flamer discovers a gentler alternative.

We all did it. That extra glass of champagne at the Christmas party. The sneaky slices of leftover pavlova. The trainers that have been pushed to the back of your wardrobe with your dusty gym bag. The new year has well and truly begun, but those resolutions are blowing out with the notches on your belt.

Enter the detox. White-toothed models holding boxed sets of cleansing promises: 12 days to a better colon; how to wring out your liver and lose those last five kilos. There are numerous detox plans on the market, but how do you escape the hype? And more importantly, how do you avoid feeling worse than you did before?

Jan Purser is a naturopathic nutrition consultant and co-author of *The Detox Cookbook* and *The Eat Well Cookbook* (both from Allen & Unwin).

She says seeing a practitioner is always a good start. "A simple urine test will reveal any toxicity and give you a good idea of where you are at and how well your detox is going," she says.

Purser says it is a case of taking stock of your current diet and making small changes to start with, rather than taking drastic, potentially painful action.

"If you drink lots of tea and coffee, cut down gradually, rather than going cold turkey — that will just give you massive headaches and you will feel foul," she says. "You can have weak green tea once or twice a day, which has a little caffeine, but it is really high in antioxidants, which are very beneficial."

Purser points out that a radical detox will cause people the most angst, especially if you expect to carry on as usual while doing it. If you do want to do an intense program, like a juice fast, she recommends taking time out at a health farm.

And what if we detox with our usual routine? Can we stray from the bathroom?

"In a general detox, you might find you're a bit

loose the first few days but you shouldn't be running to the toilet," says Purser. "You're really just omitting problem-causing foods and replacing them with more nutritious alternatives."

Purser recommends using products to support your cleanse, such as a detox powder, probiotics and soluble fibre. She also espouses the importance of protein:

"Have lots of vegetables or salad at lunch and dinner with some protein, especially fish. If you must eat meat, make it organic. For breakfast, I have a smoothie with the powder plus a couple of corn thins with a nut spread. Ideally, you are removing

wheat, dairy, caffeine, sugar and alcohol and making sure everything you eat is as unprocessed as possible."

As for the length of the cleanse, Purser swears by detoxing for a month twice a year. "It makes a big difference to your immune system and health and helps you keep your weight on track. When your skin is clear and your eyes look sparkly, it definitely feels worth it."

Forget fasting, and switch to lighter meals, such as fish, instead.

