Cleansing and detox kits line the shelves of health food stores. Every time you walk past them you think, I should do a cleanse...one of these days. Do it soon!

The reported effects of doing a cleanse range from weight loss and feeling increased energy to the noticeable reduction of chronic problems such as constipation, indigestion, headaches, skin irritations, congestion, and even depression.

Here's a list of ingredients found in popular detox programs that you may want to know more about.

**Fabulous fibre**
The role of fibre for regular cleansing cannot be overstated. Not only does fibre regulate and normalize bowel function, it works as a waste magnet in the bowel and assists in eliminating toxic substances. To get the most detoxification benefit from any kind of fibre, be sure to drink at least 10 glasses of filtered water every day.

Gum arabic, a fibre derived from the Acacia tree, gives healthier form and consistency to bowel movements.

Alginate, a fibre from algae and seaweed, has chelating properties. Alginate latches onto toxins, moving them through the intestinal tract and out of the body.

Cellulose, a vegetable fibre found in plants, is an effective stool bulking agent.

Flaxseeds, when ground, are one of the most highly recommended sources of dietary fibre. They also provide omega-3 fats and lignans.

**Nutritional support for detoxification**
Effective elimination of toxins from all systems of the body requires significant nutritional support from food and supplement sources. Here are some of the supplemental factors found in detoxification and cleansing programs.

Alpha-lipoic acid (ALA) is a water and fat soluble antioxidant. It works synergistically with vitamins C and E in the production of glutathione.

Glutathione is an amino acid type of compound with antioxidant properties that has been scientifically proven to scavenge free radicals and neutralize toxins. Glutathione helps the liver detoxify chemicals such as acetaminophen (the active ingredient in pain relief medication), copper, and cadmium. It also safely transports these toxins to the liver and kidneys where they are processed for elimination.

L-glutamine, an amino acid, combats alcohol cravings (a definite no-no while cleansing). It also helps rebuild a healthy digestive tract while possibly inhibiting Candida albicans.

N-acetylcysteine (NAC), a highly stable form of cysteine is a sulphur-containing amino acid that boosts cellular glutathione levels required to detoxify heavy metals such as mercury and lead. It's especially beneficial to combat and neutralize environmental pollutants including smog and petrochemicals.

N-acetylglucosamine (NAG) is an amino acid found in all tissues of the body, especially in healthy digestive membranes. It may benefit digestive functions by regenerating healthy digestive cells.

Selenium, ideally from a natural yeast source, is another glutathione activator. It also protects cells against the toxins that can lead to cancer.

Vitamin C is a water soluble,
antioxidant vitamin that helps cleanse the body of toxins from sources such as cigarette smoke and carbon monoxide. It also functions as an effective bowel cleanser and laxative.

Zinc, often called "the healing mineral," helps repair damaged digestive tract tissue and supports immune function.

**Powerful probiotics and prebiotics**
The large family of probiotics acts in powerful yet gentle ways to build protective colonies of healthy intestinal bacteria. This proliferation of healthy gut flora literally overwhelms the toxins and unfriendly bacteria to which we are frequently exposed. Probiotic ingredients in cleansing formulas often include: Lactobacillus acidophilus and bifidum, Lactobacillus salivarius, Bifidobacterium infantis and Bifidobacterium longum. Prebiotic substances act as food for probiotics. Fructooligosaccharides (FOS) and Larch arabinogalactan are two examples of prebiotic ingredients.

**Herbal helpers**
Traditional and modern uses of herbs to support internal cleansing are well-documented. Here is an abbreviated list of herbs with cleansing properties.

- **Cascara sagrada** (*Rhamnus purshiana*) is an effective, non-irritating laxative.
- **Dandelion root** (*Taraxacum officinale*) acts as a blood cleanser, laxative, and diuretic. It stimulates the liver to detoxify poisons and encourages the flow of bile from the gallbladder.
- **Fenugreek seed extract** (*Trigonella foenum*) is a bowel and respiratory system cleanser that eliminates excessive mucus and soothes inflammation.
- **Garlic** is the mother of all detoxifiers. Garlic contains more than 100 therapeutic sulphur compounds which help deactivate damaging substances.
- **Ginger** (*Zingiber officinale*) is a detoxifier and anti-inflammatory. Ginger enhances the therapeutic effect of other herbs.
- **Green tea** (*Camellia sinensis*) contains a family of potent antioxidants with natural cleansing and detoxification properties.
- **Milk thistle** (*Silybum marianum*) creates a barrier from liver toxins.
- **Peppermint leaves** (*Mentha piperita*) soothe digestive upset and enhance the effectiveness of other cleansing and detoxifying herbs.
- **Red clover blossoms** (*Trifolium pretense*) cleanse the blood and lymphatic system.
- **Red rhubarb root** (*Rheum palmatum*) is a nonhabitual, gentle laxative cleanser.
- **Slippery elm bark** (*Ulmus fulva*) soothes and heals digestive tract irritation and ulceration.

This list is understandably limited by available space. For more information on the high quality cleansing products available at your local health food store, ask for assistance from the qualified natural products advisor.

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