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# Glam girls' guide to

# DETOX

THE FINER DETAILS OF DETOXING ARE HARDLY PHOTO-WORTHY. SO WHAT HAPPENS WHEN ONE OF AUSTRALIA'S HOTTEST CELEBRITY STYLISTS SIGNS UP FOR A DETOX RETREAT COMPLETE WITH COLONICS? GIRL ABOUT TOWN AMBER RENAÉ SHARES HER CLEANSE DIARY.

PHOTOGRAPHY: ANT ONG

If the thought of going six days without food and getting a daily colonic scares the sh\*t (pun intended) out of you, then read on.

Despite a frenetic schedule of events, shoots and related commitments, I'm quite a healthy person generally; I exercise and meditate daily, follow a Paleo diet and can't resist a good wellness fad at any time, let alone New Year (coconut oil pulling – check. Earthing, you bet).

But late last year I realised my health had seriously suffered due to a dramatic workload increase during the second half of the year. For me, the unfortunate corollary of winning at work is that my achievements inversely correlate with waning self-care practices.

After a heady few months, I had skin issues, was having trouble sleeping, I wasn't bouncing out of bed each morning – it was taking a coffee or two before my brain would wake up (and I'm not that person who says, 'but first, coffee!'). My usual lurgy-free winter was plagued by those niggly sniffles that give off that sickly vibe. There was nothing critically wrong, but it was all just a bit 'not right, if you know what I mean.

## DAY 1

### NATUROPATHIC CONSULT, FIRST COLONIC

Hunger: 7 // Energy: 8 // Days without food: 2 (I didn't eat the day before I checked in)

I was still running on adrenals and coffee when I first arrived, so energy levels were high as I sat down to my naturopathic consultation. We did some initial tests (pH and ketosis among others) and ran through what to expect so I was feeling comfortable and settled before it came time to do my first colonic.

To be honest, I wasn't really that concerned about the whole colonic shindig. I've done a bunch of them in the past, I kind of felt like I was a bit of an old hat at them (I once did a retreat where you had to self-administer two daily colonics! Following that I fancied myself as a bit of pro).

The colonics, in the end, were really quite

cathartic, as you are quite literally releasing years of blocked emotions along with the years of built-up faecal matter. Yep, years! My colonic therapist, Vicki, said she once witnessed a grown man pass a marble that he had swallowed when he was eight years old! If that's not enough motivation to have them, I don't know what is!

Not to mention the staggering health benefits. Did you know they're calling the gut the new brain? There are countless studies espousing the impact that gut bacteria has on mental health and things like anxiety and depression, so it's kind of important to get this right.

## DAY 2

### CHI NEI TSANG MASSAGE, SECOND COLONIC

Hunger: 6 // Energy: 4 // Days without food: 3

The founder and naturopath at Byron Bay Detox Retreats, Natalie Purcell, arrived like an angel on the morning of Day 2 to deliver my Chi Nei Tsang massage.

The Chi Nei Tsang blends Chinese and Thai massage and meditation techniques in a detoxifying and energising abdominal massage, and it felt like an 'un-knotting' and detangling on both a physical and emotional level.

We finished with a meditation to release blocked emotions from the organs (which I loved) and this is a practice that I do to this day at home.

This was quickly followed by my second colonic, and by this stage I already felt like I'd let a lot of sh\*t go, both physically and emotionally!

I then spent the rest of the day fussing about, and feeling like I should be 'doing' something.

"How about I make a cup of tea."

"Great idea." Makes tea, drinks tea.

Ticks that box. "Right, what's next?"

This went on for the first two days really. Shuffling about, looking for things to do and boxes to tick.

My energy also took a dip on this day; by now the adrenalin/coffee cocktail had worn off and my body was coming to the crashing halt that it had needed for a very long time. And as the stillness set in, I could quite literally feel every cell in my body taking one giant, collective exhale, thanking me for allowing it this time to restore and rebalance.



## DAY 3

### SAM THE SOUND HEALER, THIRD COLONIC

Hunger: 4 // Energy: 5 // Days without food: 4

By Day 3 I was really settling into the Byron groove, and could quite happily sit still for extended periods of time without feeling the need to do anything. Literally just sitting. Staring at the clouds, looking at the trees, getting lost in my thoughts, and marvelling at the mechanics of this glorious body of mine.

Did I mention that my cabin was completely secluded on the Tallow Beach Houses Estate? I took full advantage of this fact and swanned around in my birthday suit for the majority of each day. Naked sunbaking, naked yoga, naked meditation. Being that nude for that long definitely added to the newfound love and appreciation for my body.

Fortunately I had just managed to pop on a Camilla kaftan when Sam the Sound Healer arrived on my doorstep with didgeridoo, crystal bowls and glass triangles in tow.

Sound healing has always been pretty powerful for me, so I was really looking forward to this. As I lay on the floor, Sam set up behind my head. Then as I sunk deep into relaxation he orchestrated the most exquisitely intense yet subtly magical binaural experience of my life.

Sam said he channels the sounds uniquely for each session based on what he feels the client needs to receive. And he definitely hit the spot with me! I was left buzzing after our sesh and feeling more in tune with myself than I had in a long time.



## DAY 5

### CHECK-OUT – YOGA, MEDITATION

Hunger: 1 // Energy: 9 // Days without food: 6

This seemed totally counterintuitive to me, but here we were, six days after my last meal, my energy levels were through the roof and I wasn't the slightest bit interested in eating food.

They even delivered my 'break fast' meal (half a papaya) the night before, so I had that sucker staring at me for about 18 hours before I got around to eating it. Just didn't feel like it!

What was really surprising during the week was understanding the amount of energy and glucose that the brain needs to fuel even the most basic of tasks. I committed to sharing my journey each day on Instagram, so when it came time to whip out the camera, compose a shot, then upload that with a witty/interesting/informative caption, I was left virtually stupefied.

While I could lie around staring at the clouds all day and not feel fatigued or hungry at all, after about an hour of composing one shot I would be physically exhausted and positively starving, often needing to go down for a nap.

Which made me understand why it's so important to do a cleanse in an environment like this, where you can really give your brain the break it so deserves, as well as your body.

## DAY 4

### COCKTAIL HOUR, SAUNA

Hunger: 3 // Energy: 7 // Days without food: 5

Today was a free day, and by now I had finally managed to settle into the art of nothingness. So I quite happily whiled away the best part of the day in naked gloriousness with nothing much to show for the day except for a good, even tan.

Oh and I did pop down to the far-infrared sauna for my final sesh; this was something I'd been doing each day to assist the detoxification process. Our skin is a major organ of elimination and these saunas greatly assist in reducing the toxic load.

And since it was Friday, I figured it was cocktail hour in the real world, so I poured a vino glass of my berry juice and enjoyed a silent sundowner on the back deck. Bliss!



## CONCLUSION

It feels like I've pressed the reset button on my health and wellbeing. And the best part is, I feel confident in maintaining these results long term due to the fact that here was such a dramatic improvement in such a short period rather than if I was in the real world slowly chipping away at my health goals: two steps forward, one step back style.

My baseline stress levels have dropped dramatically. Things that were getting me quite agitated pre-cleanse, now don't bother me in the slightest.

I have a newfound appreciation for this body I inhabit, and I now look after it like it's my best friend (rather than a podgy, incontinent frenemy).

I've had a mini-facelift, shaving, oh, I'd say about four to five years off of my face. Wrinkles, saggy skin and dullness have gone and I have a luminosity and glow that's been missing since my youth.

I've lost the last two to three kg, and the best part is, aside from some gentle yoga and walks, I didn't do any other form of exercise. This adds fuel to my theory that a lot of the 'fat' that we carry is actually inflammation, and when you address the cause of the inflammation, the weight will drop off naturally.

I have new health practices that I've integrated seamlessly into my daily routine, which I could never have done pre-cleanse. (I used to hear of those people swapping their morning coffees for a green smoothie, and I'd think... well, that's some crazy right there. Now I *am* one of those people! And I love it!)

But probably the biggest a-ha moment was discovering the joy of single tasking. Yep, single tasking, it's a thing! You probably haven't heard of it because, like me, you're likely a highly efficient multi-tasker, relishing your magnificent ability to squeeze more tasks into one moment than a single person could do in a week.

Impressive, yes. Enjoyable, no.

Turns out doing one thing at a time actually amplifies the joy of that task. More presence equals more happiness, right?

I found myself sitting in the sun without reading a book, walking without listening to a podcast, and eating (or dinking as it was in my case) without checking my phone. Just doing one thing at a time!

And surprisingly, each task became more enjoyable. More!

I would never normally allow myself the luxury of indulging in a cup of tea just for the sake of it. There would have to be some purpose to that deliciously indulgent down time; it couldn't simply be just that – down time.

No more! This one realisation alone has been positively liberating, and I'm now finding the joy and reckless abandon in doing *Just. One. Thing. At. A. Time.*

After all, the space between the noise is where the beauty lies, right?



# Prior Knowledge

## WHAT TO KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

Despite gaining acceptance among less fringey types, colonic irrigation – or 'colonic lavage' – remains contentious. Many medical professionals vociferously pooh-poo the practice as unnecessary at best and potentially dangerous at worst.

WORDS: HANNAH BLAMEY

## Doctor, do you think that's necessary?

Despite claims of its capacity to buoy the body's functions and make candidates feel better, the benefits of colon cleansing are often disputed. A study at Georgetown University claimed that there is 'limited clinical evidence validating colon therapy as a health promotion practice' – a thesis shared by the head of Flinders University's Department of Human Physiology, Professor Simon Brookes.

While he doesn't dispute that some candidates believe they reap the benefits, the expert in pseudoscience does attribute benefits to a placebo effect.

"...there is absolutely no medical evidence that it carries any benefits at all," says Prof Brookes.

But proponents are equally passionate. Bianca James is a registered nurse, founder of Sydney Colon Health Clinic and a vocal pioneer of colonic lavage in Australia.

As well as ample contemporary evidence including an early '90s study at Britain's Royal College of Surgeons concluding that toxins produced by the bowel were integral to controlling human disease, James says visionary doctors such as Hippocrates supported cleansing practices. "We have ample proof of the benefits and the lives colonic lavage therapy has saved," James says.

## Weight gains

While it's been imagined as a synonym for weight loss, an interior cleanse doesn't actually melt kilos. Instead, the facilitation of "the removal of stagnant faecal matter and subsequent proliferation of bacteria and their toxins" can result in a smaller scale reading (poop is heavy). A secondary benefit of colonics is re-education of the colon to perform its functions effectively, James says.

## Space invaders

Never has the term 'invasive procedure' been more apt. While colonics demand a certain decorum and don't befit those with the embarrassment gene, they are also classified an invasive procedure by medical standards. Yet that's not how they're commonly imagined, James says. After all,

so-called 'clinics' offer colonic deals of the day for as little as \$49.

While each facility has different protocols, James says a medically run clinic will usually ask you to complete a comprehensive health appraisal before facilitating the procedure to ensure its appropriateness for a candidate's health goals. Screening may include urine tests for hydration, pH levels and diabetes, weight readings and blood pressure checks.

James, who was enlisted by NSW Health to help devise guidelines after a hepatitis incident cast doubt on the safety of colonics, laments that many therapists don't have medical qualifications that enable them to implement adequate infection control. Rogue operators rather than the practice per se put patients at risk, James suggests.

Respective state guidelines are not enforced for therapists, jeopardising consumer safety.

"It is up to the general public to do their own due diligence to ensure their safety," she says.

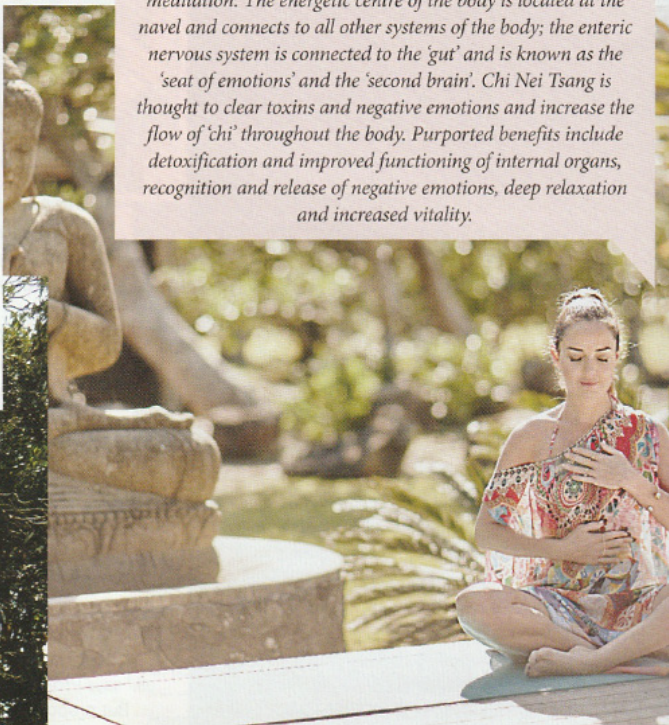
### Shitty details

Specifics of a so-called 'colonic' depend in part which system you choose. The open, non-pressurised

## FRINGE TERMINOLOGY

### CHI NEI TSANG MASSAGE

*The ancient Taoist healing art of Chi Nei Tsang is said to clear blocked energy of the internal organs and releases negative emotions. It consists of an abdominal massage using pressure points and energy work finished with a healing sound meditation. The energetic centre of the body is located at the navel and connects to all other systems of the body; the enteric nervous system is connected to the 'gut' and is known as the 'seat of emotions' and the 'second brain'. Chi Nei Tsang is thought to clear toxins and negative emotions and increase the flow of 'chi' throughout the body. Purported benefits include detoxification and improved functioning of internal organs, recognition and release of negative emotions, deep relaxation and increased vitality.*



## GLAM RAP SHEET

Did I glow after all that sweating and shitting? After just six days, my skin looked amazing, I was bounding out of bed and my abs popped like they hadn't in a long time. No matter what the science says, I'm siding with proof. If I did get fringe benefits such as buoyed immunity and fertility, all the better to show off a knockout fitted dress with.

system involves lying on a couch with a built-in toilet while a pencil thin, sterile, disposable, single-use rectal tube is inserted, James says. Warm, purified water is gently infused into the bowel for 40 to 45 minutes or until 14 litres of purified water has circulated - during which time a feeling of fullness will culminate in a need to eliminate faecal matter. The closed, pressurised system also involves a table but the procedure is controlled entirely by a therapist, who inserts a tube the width of a 50-cent piece and pumps water into the bowel until the patient can't stand any more. Most people bow out at about 40 litres. At this point, a valve reversal results in waste being 'sucked back through' the tube through a vacuum cleaner hose-like section and through a viewing tube into a toilet. That's not the end of it. Therapists then examine eliminated waste for candida and look for "other parasites, blood, mucous, undigested food and any other abnormalities", says James. Medically run clinics also provide a detailed treatment report with diet and lifestyle recommendations to maintain the freshly cleaned slate. "The experience is generally a positive one," James says.

Expect to pay \$90 to \$120 per treatment. For further information, visit [colonhealth.com.au](http://colonhealth.com.au) ■

