

The toxic avenger

A stressball attempts to pulverize her poisons with seven days of high-end healing. By **Gretchen Kalwinski**

Yeah, yeah—everyone’s busy. But my insane schedule causes me bodily harm. There’s that persistent tension headache and cough. And the fainting episode on the El. And the trouble sleeping. When chest palpitations began, my doc said these symptoms were anxiety related, and suggested slowing down. Great, but who has time? To see if I could get a quick fix, I went hardcore, doing a detox treatment every day of the week. Bonus: These treatments require little effort on my part other than a cobra pose. . . . and an occasional dash to the bathroom.

SUNDAY colon cleanse

After scaring myself silly reading online gut-cleansing forums and viewing photos of toothed intestinal parasites, my adventure begins with **Ultimate Cleanse**, a series of pills with ingredients such as dandelion that are taken to “release accumulated toxins in the body” and combat “low energy.” User forums say the first day is the most, um, *urgent*, so I stay home, close to a toilet, and boy am I glad—I visit the loo seven times today. I don’t see any fanged parasites, thank God, and I do feel lighter and more energized by day’s end. *Whole Foods (locations citywide, wholefoods.com)*. \$28.95.

MONDAY ear candling

Proponents of this folk-medicine treatment claim it clears gunk from sinuses, so during lunch I visit **Elizabeth Adam Salon**. While I lie on my side, an aesthetician inserts a conical candle in my ear, lights it and trims the end until the flame is 4 inches from my ear. At the end of the half-hour treatment, she shows me my earwax gob: disgusting. But my congestion doesn’t improve. Next! *845 N Michigan Ave, suite 908E (312-988-9611, elizabethadamsalon.com)*. \$68.

TUESDAY Ionic Foot Bath with Detox Pedicure

At **Silken Tent**, I put my feet in a tub of water with a noisy black Aquavida “array,” a contraption designed to stimulate glands in the feet, drawing out toxins like aluminum, lead and mercury (which can cause headaches, insomnia and poor mental concentration, respectively). My water turns orange, (other common shades are black and green), but no one in the salon can explain why, and the Aquavida website says the water changes even *without* your feet due to “chemical interactions.” Hmm, sounds fishy. However, an amazingly detailed pedicure and reflexology treatment follows. I’m so mellow afterward that friends at dinner note my tranquil state. *2300 Chestnut Ave, Glenview (877-774-5536, thesilkentent.com)*. \$105.

WEDNESDAY hot yoga

I’ve done this type of yoga before and know to expect an intense, 105-degree session at **Bikram Yoga Chicago**. During the sweaty poses, I relish in knowing that hot yoga not only improves strength and flexibility, it also opens pores, energizes the body and releases toxins through sweat. Postworkout, I’m a wet noodle and sleep like a baby. *1344 N Milwaukee Ave, third floor (773-395-9150, bycic.com)*. \$15.

THURSDAY Enercupping therapy with acupuncture

My headache is no longer raging, but I’m still having palpitations. When I say that to my acupuncturist at **Ruby Room**, she focuses on acupuncture, since she says cupping is more for increasing circulation and “promoting the free flow of qi [vital energy],” while needles “calm the shen [spirit] and unblock stagnation” that causes tension issues like headaches and chest-tightness. She presses warm cups on my back, then painlessly pokes my arms, legs and forehead with needles. Afterward, the palpitations have lessened and the headache is gone. Good thing, since I’ve got a wine party to attend. If only acupuncture could hurl a preemptive strike against my inevitable hangover. *1743-45 W Division St (773-235-2323, rubyroom.com)*. \$150.

FRIDAY ESPA detox body envelopment

Today’s after-work treatment at the luxurious **Peninsula Spa** is supposed to stimulate the lymphatic system and help purge whatever environmental toxins you carry around (bus exhaust, heavy metals, etc.) First I’m scrubbed with a dry brush, then lathered with a mix of seaweed, clay and ginger. A layer of plastic and hot towels comes next to get me sweating, which helps draw out those toxins. My therapist has magic hands—only problem is the oils she uses to give me an (amazing) scalp massage render my locks greasy, and she says I shouldn’t shampoo till tomorrow to allow the oil to moisturize my scalp. Since I’m now a greaseball, I bail on a gallery opening and opt for bed. I feel so pampered that for once I couldn’t care less about my social obligations—a liberating thought. *108 E Superior St (312-573-6860, chicago.peninsula.com/pch/spa.html)*. \$155.

SATURDAY mind detox

I’m loving my spa lifestyle, but I’m sick of being touched by people I don’t know, and am relieved that today’s treatment involves only me, my apartment and my boyfriend. This detox is a mind-cleanse (prescribed by our Chill Out editor who knows about these things). The idea is: no phones, stereos, TVs or computers, so we proceed with brunch making and newspaper reading, free from white noise. We’re so into kicking it Amish-style that instead of turning lights on at dusk, we light candles, which allows for few activities except taking a walk and smooching by candlelight. We’re so relaxed by bedtime that we vow to repeat this monthly.

POST DETOX, my tension headaches are gone,

my chest palpitations have quieted and I’m two pounds lighter. It’s hard to tell which treatment did the most good, but my instincts say the mind detox and acupuncture were the most effective, so I’ll continue with those on occasion. But now I know that my doc was right: Sometimes “balance” can be less about chichi spa treatments and more about simple downtime—and in the end that’s way more satisfying than being manhandled by strangers.



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