

Colon cleansing has no benefit but many side effects including vomiting and death

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Colon cleansing - it's been described as a natural way to enhance well-being, but Georgetown University doctors say there's no evidence to back that claim. In fact, their review of scientific literature, published today in the August issue of *The Journal of Family Practice*, demonstrates that colon cleansing can cause side effects ranging from cramping to renal failure and death.

The procedure, sometimes called colonic irrigation or colonic hydrotherapy, often involves use of chemicals followed by flushing the colon with water through a tube inserted in the rectum. It has ancient roots, but was discredited by the American Medical Association in the early 1900s, yet colon cleansing has staged a comeback.

"There can be serious consequences for those who engage in colon cleansing whether they have the procedure done at a spa or perform it at home," says the paper's lead author, Ranit Mishori, M.D., a family medicine physician at Georgetown University School of Medicine.

"Colon cleansing products in the form of [laxatives](#), teas, powders and capsules with names such as Nature's Bounty Colon Cleaner tout benefits that don't exist." She also says it's important to remember the U.S. [Food and Drug Administration](#) has no authority to monitor these products.

Mishori and her colleagues examined 20 studies published in the medical literature published in the last decade. She says that while these reports show little evidence of benefit, there is an abundance of studies noting side effects following the use of cleansing products including cramping,

bloating, nausea, vomiting, electrolyte imbalance and [renal failure](#).

"Some herbal preparations have also been associated with aplastic anemia and [liver toxicity](#)," she says.

And Mishori points out that colon cleansing services are increasingly being offered at spas or clinics by practitioners who call themselves 'colon hygienists' but they have no significant [medical training](#). In fact, organizations such as the National Board for Colon Hydrotherapy and others who promote colon cleansing require hygienists to have little more than a high school diploma.

Mishori says there are much better ways to enhance well-being: "Eat a balanced diet, exercise regularly, get six to eight hours of sleep and see a doctor regularly."

Provided by Georgetown University Medical Center

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