



Diary

of a detox

Devotees swear by fasting, enemas and wheatgrass shots to help shed physical and emotional baggage, but does a detox retreat really do any good?

BY RACHEL ROBERTS, PHOTOGRAPHS BY CHRIS WATT

SPRING. A TIME OF LAMBS GAM-bolling freely in fields, snowdrops bursting into bloom – and grown women shuddering with fear. After a winter spent covering up underneath bulky and figure-forgiving clothes, summer is twinkling around the corner. And that means one thing – gulp! – beaches and barely there bikinis.

While some of us might be happy to take the slow-but-sure approach to shedding those excess pounds gained through cold-weather comfort eating, the majority of us want a far quicker fix.

Enter TV nutritionist Amanda Hamilton. In a new series on **UKTV Style**, *Spa of Weight Loss for Life*, she and her team aim to get four women and one man summer-svelte in five days.

I was sent by *The Scotsman Magazine* to undergo the same Turbo Detox in Crieff Hydro. Would I make it

through the intensive spring clean for body and mind or run screaming for the hills?

Sunday

I arrive at Crieff Hydro after a nine-hour journey, tired and stressed out. I'm a tad worried about the next five days because I've had a relaxed attitude to (read "ignored") the pre-cleanse diet I should have stuck to religiously for the previous fortnight. I've cut back on the "toxin trinity" of wheat, alcohol and caffeine, but not eradicated them entirely.

As I tuck into our "last supper" of green leaves, asparagus and cucumber, I survey the other 12 detoxers. I bet none of them drank nearly half a bottle of vodka 24 hours ago. Oops!



Monday

OK, this is officially the most surreal Monday morning of my life. I'm sitting with the group of women I met less than 24 hours ago, looking through pictures of colon plaque.

For the uninitiated, they really are something to behold. I'm struggling to believe it is possible for the human body to produce such toxic-looking waste.

Nutritionists Amanda Hamilton and Karen Devine explain how the icky-looking goo builds up inside our

"I fantasise about how tasty the photographer would look on a kebab skewer over a fire"

guts over the years. The culprits are "sticky" ingredients such as wheat and dairy.

Scottish-born Hamilton co-presents the BBC2 show *Something for the Weekend* and is the founder of the Turbo Detox Week. With her infectious energy and lithe figure, she's a living advertisement for her own programme. But my stomach still lurches when we are given our very own enema kit. Thankfully, even though I feel nauseous, there's nothing in my tummy to be sick with. It has been 16 hours since my last solid food – we've been sipping nutrient-packed fresh juices ever since.

My eyes water as Karen shows us exactly where to

pop the nozzle and then I'm off to give myself the first of the week's ten enemas.

The idea is to lie on your side and insert the tube, containing the body-temperature water, ahem, up your bottom.

The liquid is laced with caffeine to turbo charge the liver's detoxifying process. As my colon fills up, the sensation isn't painful, but mildly uncomfortable.

I manage to hold it in for ten minutes before – whoosh! – I have my first "evacuation". I can't resist stealing a glance and am strangely proud of the strings of undulating waste because it means the process is starting to work.

Tuesday

I wake up at 6am after a fitful night's sleep and relish the time to enjoy the spectacular scenery. We are staying in luxury houses on the sprawling estate of Crieff Hydro, and it's a breathtaking location.

The sun comes up and dapples the mountains with its golden light, hawks circle in the sky and cockerels crow in the distance. I feel myself starting to relax and I'm surprised that I'm not hungrier than I feel, although I am really looking forward to the first of the day's five fruit or vegetable juices.

Each morning, we gather in the "hub" – our communal area – for a talk about nutrition. Today, Karen tells us about the liver and how we use a staggering 80 to 90 per cent of our energy to process food.

So, by feeding our bodies with easy-to-digest juices and efficiency-boosting supplements, our systems will have vital space to detox and rejuvenate. Hunger pangs will be kept at bay with regular shots of wheatgrass and by mixing soluble fibre, Psyllium, into our juices.

Suddenly, my mood takes a very dark turn and I feel tears pricking my eyes. I just don't feel right. Luckily,

harmony is restored after another enema. Immediately, my sunny mood returns as the toxins leave my body and I feel amazing. I realise my mental detox is starting to dovetail with the physical cleanse.

This is enforced by the session of hypnotherapy I have in the afternoon. I tell clinical hypnotherapist Sjanie Ango that I want to tackle some of my toxic thoughts; particularly about relationships.

It doesn't take long for me to relax into a trance-like state and Ango talks me through some powerful visualisations. I fight a losing battle with my tears, which spill down my cheeks for the last ten minutes.

Later, there's a chance to bond with the other women on the programme – who range in age from early twenties to late fifties. Weight loss is a unifying goal, but there are other issues to be resolved, too. One woman hopes to treat her osteoporosis holistically and another is using the detox as a healing tool after a traumatic experience: a serious assault.

Wednesday

This is my toughest day; although I've slept for nearly ten hours, I am exhausted. Amanda assures me it's all part of the process.

Apparently, I'm having my "liver" day, when my body is going great guns to release as many toxins as it can. And boy, is it letting me know.

From the neck down, I feel like I'm encased in concrete; wading through treacle. I'm experiencing serious brain fog, too. My poor grey matter can't retain information for longer than a minute.

It's actually very funny – every time someone speaks to me, I pretty much forget what they've said immediately afterwards. It's a peculiar feeling, like I'm on autopilot and have no real control over my body, which seems to be doing exactly what it wants to.

Comically, everyone's last vestiges of politeness have

"My eyes water as Karen shows us where to pop the nozzle"

flown out of the window. Forget bosom buddies; we're turning into bottom buddies.

Given my high levels of fatigue, I'm really fortunate to have booked two of my body therapies for today. First up is a hot stone massage. Oh. My. God. The

stones feel like molten liquid as they cushion my skin, heating my muscles. An hour of pleasurable pummelling later and I've all but lost the power of speech. Stringing a sentence together is almost impossible and I have a full-on giggling fit, much to my therapist's amusement.

Next, I'm "Rolfed". No, my naked body isn't daubed in oils by showbiz artist Rolf Harris. Rather, I find myself in the capable hands of Heath Wilson, who is passionate about Rolfing, a form of bodywork created by American biochemist Dr Ida Rolf in the 1950s.

I stand in front of Wilson as he scans his eyes over me to look at my posture and pinpoint problem areas. Apparently, I'm guilty of "rolling out" on the sides of my feet, which means my knees are labouring underneath unnecessary strain.

My right hip is over-extending too, putting stress on my lower back. Wilson surmises it's this that is causing the bone-deep pain I've been experiencing recently during my jogging sessions.

As Wilson gets to work, he explains that he's manipulating my "fascia"; the body's inner cling film. It's this that holds everything together and needs some serious TLC after years of wear and tear.

I'm not going to lie. Having the lumps and bumps ironed out is not the most serene experience of my life. But the discomfort is worth it when I stand up after the session and feel a foot taller.

Thursday

I wake up with a feeling of trepidation today. Joy of joys, it's Parasite Day, so we'll be replacing the caffeine with garlic to flush out any worms or nutrient-sucking critters from our guts.

For the first time, I really struggle with the enema. My poor senses are utterly confused. The smell of cooked garlic is normally a pleasure trigger, alerting my stomach to incoming tasty food. However, bottom-beated garlic has a very different aroma and one I think may well be etched in my olfactory memory until the end of my days. It's safe to say my love affair with Pizza Express has been killed stone dead.

Thankfully, the thought of breaking our fast tomorrow lifts my spirits. I've not allowed myself to torture myself with thoughts about eating up until now.

But suddenly, food is *all* I can think about. I swear I'm starting to hallucinate. Rather like a character from a cartoon, I'm seeing giant chicken drumsticks instead of people's heads.

When the photographer arrives to take some snaps, I fantasise about how tasty he would look on a kebab skewer, cooking slowly over an open fire.

But I have to make do with yet another juice, and a large shot of wheatgrass. I've managed to stomach the potent green drink up until now, but I feel totally wretched for a good couple of hours afterwards. It makes three of the other women sick.

The evening talk in the hub does little to assuage my mounting hunger. Amanda talks to us about Ayurvedic medicine and outlines the three different body types – Pitta, Vata and Kapha. Apparently, I'm a mix of Pitta and Vata.

It's interesting stuff, certainly. The trouble is, quite a lot of the conversation is about what kinds of foods are suitable for each category. And every single time Pitta gets a mention, I go off into a dreamy reverie about bread.

My excitement about the next morning's breakfast keeps me awake for most of the night. It's like being seven years old, waiting for Christmas morning.

Friday

A sense of giddy anticipation is palpable in the group as we all gather in the hub for our first meal together. Never has a fruit salad tasted so good; the zing of the

pineapple reactivates my taste buds and rediscovering the gritty texture of kiwi is an oral delight.

However, I only manage a few spoonfuls before I'm full and I leave the grapes, which are far too sugary for my newly cleansed palate.

Now for the moment of truth – have I ditched some extra pounds during the detox? My stomach definitely feels flatter, but I'm still stunned when the scales register an 8lb weight loss. My waist and hips have also shrunk by 1.5 inches. I'm really pleased with the result.

Detox: the sequel

We're advised to ease ourselves gently back into the real world, slowly reintroducing different foods and alcohol into our regimes. Amanda also suggests that we detox one day a month – complete with enemas – to keep up the good work. I feel so good and energised after this week that I've already earmarked the days in my diary. **SM**

■ *Spa of Weight Loss for Life starts on UKTV Style on 6 May. For more information about detox breaks, visit www.chrysalishealth.co.uk*



**Nutritionist
 Amanda
 Hamilton
 gives advice**



Rachel Roberts at
Crieff Hydro during
her detox week



**Clockwise
from above:
Rachel
Roberts (cen-
tre) with
fellow turbo
detoxers;
drinking a shot
of wheatgrass;
contemplating
an enema**