

WELLNESS

I Got 3 Colonics in 3 Days. Here's How My Body (and Mind) Reacted

I WALKED INTO A SCREEN DOOR, FOR ONE



By **Dana Dickey** • Published Jan 11, 2024



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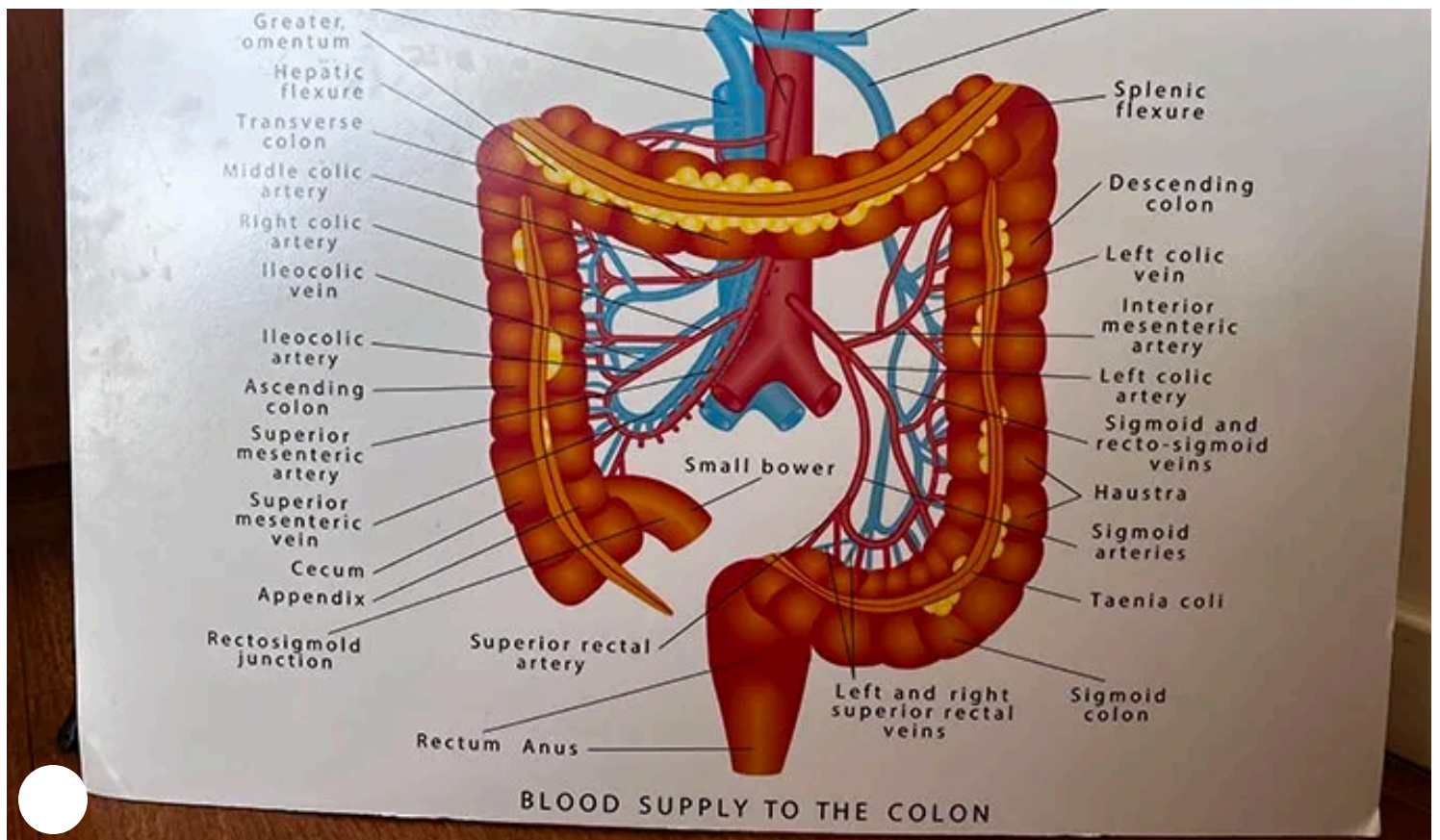
Friday night at 5 p.m., I pulled into the [We Care Spa](#) in Desert Hot Springs, California. What's the best antidote to having spent three hours in rush-hour Los Angeles traffic? Try rolling your bags into the corner of a spa and immediately spending 30 minutes having a tube stuck up your bum and masses of water pumped in, to basically power-wash your colon. While I'm not a regular colonic recipient, I have tried the procedure before, but never felt the need to invest in a series.

However, I have always pictured the [We Care Spa](#) in mythic terms. When I was an editor at a glossy travel magazine in the aughts, this desert stop was famous

for being where models would go to drop pounds through a detoxification regimen (consuming only liquid, undergo daily enemas and more). I imagined models squatting by cacti, next to hippie-shack lodgings; I'd heard gossip concerning rock stars and actors packing the place before awards season. Glamour aside, I liked the rigor of the concept. And lately, I had no idea why my body wouldn't slim down the way it had previously, and I felt all-around blah. So when I heard that this storied place had undergone a luxe makeover with room upgrades and lush landscaping, I was curious. Would yesterday's crunchy-granola destination keep its OG cred after a glow-up? And more importantly, could I lose five pounds in a weekend?

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Day One: Down 1 Pound

Here's a quick recap of the colonic itself: I stripped from the waist down, laid on my left side on a table and draped a small folded sheet over my legs. A therapist came in and explained what she would do: first, insert a tube a few inches into my rear end and gently flow water into it. Next, as I felt my bowel fill up, I was supposed to roll onto my back and the water would flow out, carrying dislodged waste matter along with it.

The process was repeated a few times. As my bowel filled up, I remembered childbirth, another singular sensation of too much mass trying to occupy too little space. And as my insides were filling up, I was filled with the sense that soon I was going to have the release that comes with a big poop, but that poop never came. Or rather, it was delayed, so the experience was like edging but with poop. A note: I could really go into TMI category here, but am going to spare you, so let's just say I was pretty crampy during the experience and my therapist said the first round wasn't that productive, i.e., didn't achieve the desired "emptying out" effect.

After wrapping my towel around me and getting dressed in a bathroom nearby, and also using the bathroom there, I remembered I hadn't really eaten any big meal before I set off for the spa. I hit the juice bar, where my dinner, one whole cup of zucchini soup, tasted delicious. Back in my room, I took a staffer's advice and dry brushed my skin, then sank into a deep tub I'd filled with detox soak.

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Day Two: Down 3 Pounds

After a morning yoga class which consisted of slow stretches and bends that are specially sequenced to stimulate the colon, I took a class that detailed how to detox everything from our diets to our homes. (Apparently, PureWow’s “no outside clothes on the bed” post is a *thing*.) I was getting the idea that this colonic hydrotherapy might have gained traction in the pre-Ozempic days for dependably fast weight loss, but that its enduring appeal—many guests return annually—has more to do with overall health than with external beauty. By the afternoon, after a half-cup of mixed vegetable and fruit juices, some tea and a shake with a high percentage of psyllium husk (a natural laxative), I was ready for my second hydrocolonic session.

Today’s therapist really spilled the tea, telling me that sometimes people brought husbands or boyfriends along, but didn’t tell them until they arrived at the property about the daily deep enemas, so that basically they were ambushed by the butt wand. The process was more “productive” today, so I

kept my therapist talking to keep my mind off the intense movement going on in my stomach.

“People have coffee in the morning and they poop, so they say ‘I’m regular,’ but really it’s a fake poop,” she exclaimed, as she adjusted the tube to release some built-up air.

“A pantomime of poop!” I replied. She explained that even though caffeine stimulates peristalsis (that’s the name for involuntary reflexes of the intestines), it’s not a natural occurrence, but merely one that’s a product of a chemical, caffeine. (I’d been deadly worried about getting a soda-withdrawal caffeine headache while detoxing, but a small half-caffeinated yerba mate tea was on offer, so that I could replace my usual daily fix.)

A word about the history of this rear-end rigamarole: Written descriptions date as far back as 1,500 B.C., and enemas were known in ancient Sumeria, Babylonia, India, Greece and China. Shakespeare wrote about them. King Louis XIV supposedly had thousands in his lifetime. And Dr. John Harvey Kellogg, besides inventing cornflakes and innovating the modern American health spa, wrote in a 1917 issue of the *Journal of American Medicine* about how diet, exercise and cleansing the bowels were more effective than surgery in treating gastrointestinal disease.

So, it’s an old, old practice, even though today’s medical establishment pooh-poohs it. In 2009, a review in the *American Journal of Gastroenterology* concluded that “there are no methodologically rigorous controlled trials of colonic cleansing to support the practice for general health promotion. Conversely, there are multiple case reports and case series that describe the adverse effects” including dehydration, risk of infection or a perforated bowel.



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Day Three: Down 5 Pounds

By the third day I was feeling hella unsettled emotionally, and I didn't know why. Was it the lack of electronic stimulus—I hadn't been on the web or streamed more than one hour all day—or the cleanliness of the diet (and my colon) that was making me feel so, frankly, insecure? As I walked among giant buddha heads, lush paths blooming with orange blossoms and herbs, pausing to admire roadrunners and bunnies, I couldn't shake the sense of generalized fear of not knowing what was coming next in my life. I certainly felt like I would calm down if I could just have a piece of cake or a burger, or just anything really, but instead I had to control my mind not to think about food too much. Instead, I tried to just feel my feelings. I took off my shoes and slowly walked an outdoor maze, concentrating on my breathwork. I tried to feel the earth under my feet, instead of being preoccupied with a sense of out-of-controlness in my life. I realized, with a smile, that my sense of security is pretty illusory under the best of circumstances. Aren't we all just living our lives, then we get a pain in our side that turns out to be malignant, or we're attending a music festival and someone hang glides over the wall with a gun?

Or, on the flip side, maybe we win the lottery or, heaven help us, achieve our dreams. (It's all "crap" shoot, really.)

I decided this thought process was an emotional hangover from the day before, when walking back to my room after my colonic, I pooped my pants a little. It's natural that if you're getting gallons of water pumped inside you and consuming exclusively liquids that you might leak a little, but the idea that we don't poop our pants is so basic to our consciousness that when it goes wrong, it's a core event. How can I control anything, I can't even control my bottom? I was maybe a bit distracted by these Deep Thoughts, when leaving my glassy studio apartment/room to get to my last appointment, I walked right into the sliding screen door. (Luckily, I bounced right back.) I had a final colonic, this time less cramp-inducing than the day before, but the most stomach-flattening yet. But that little visual treat seemed suddenly superficial to me. Unsettled, I watched a thriller to distract myself that night, and fell into a dreamless sleep.

Day Four: Down 5 Pounds

I wasn't hungry, really, but I was excited to get in my car to leave We Care with its daily fiber shakes and teas and fresh juices and return to civilization. A whole class is taught about how to resume your normal diet once you leave the retreat campus. I was frankly still afraid, since I'd been in this quiet, calm and healthy place, of how would I be able to keep the even energy I'd maintained once I left? I wasn't snacking, I hadn't eaten any processed food and I hadn't starved to death. The easy-does-it approach familiar to any rehab habitue is in full force here—cherry pick a handful of changes to make in your life, don't expect to change everything or most things all at once. I decided to devote one day each week to a liquid diet (to give my digestive system a chance to rest), to eat something green once a day and to supplement my diet with a probiotic supporting gut health. As I drove from We Care, having left five pounds and a false sense of security behind, I ate the going-away salad (ah, solid food!) with my fingers. I maybe never have really tasted the color green before like I did that day, but a month later, I've kept my belly mostly flat, my diet pretty clean and I'm grateful I know where to go if I'm needing a reset.

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