

Unlocking Your Body's Detox Potential: The Crucial Role of Lymphatics

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STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- › Your lymphatic system is crucial for immune function, fluid balance and detoxification. It removes cellular waste, fights infections and aids in nutrient absorption. Proper lymphatic function is essential for overall health
- › In our interview, Dr. Perry Nickelston recommends a "Big Six" lymphatic drainage technique, focusing on six primary areas in a specific order: collarbone, jaw, shoulder/armpit, abdomen, groin and behind your knee
- › Lymph nodes cluster around major joints to facilitate movement-based drainage. Lack of movement and poor breathing lead to lymphatic stagnation, causing various health issues like inflammation and recurring infections
- › Regular movement, including walking, rebounding and hanging exercises, is vital for lymphatic health. Combining lymphatic massage with other detox strategies like sauna use enhances overall effectiveness
- › Lymphatic health is closely tied to cardiovascular and brain function. Addressing lymphatic stagnation helps with heart health, neurodegenerative diseases and chronic pain management by reducing inflammation and improving fluid dynamics

Recently, I had the pleasure of interviewing Dr. Perry Nickelston, a chiropractor and expert in lymphatics. Your lymphatic system is a vital component of your body, playing a critical role in maintaining overall health and function. As an integral part of your

immune system, it produces and transports white blood cells, particularly lymphocytes, which are essential for fighting infections and diseases.

Beyond its immune functions, your lymphatic system is crucial for maintaining fluid balance in your body by collecting excess fluid from tissues and returning it to your bloodstream. It also plays a key role in your digestive process, absorbing fats and fat-soluble vitamins from your small intestine and transporting them to your bloodstream.

Additionally, your lymphatic system acts as your body's cleaning system, removing cellular waste, debris and toxins from tissues. It aids in defending against cancer by trapping cancer cells in lymph nodes, slowing the spread of some types of cancer. The system is also responsible for the circulation of interstitial fluid, which is important for delivering nutrients to cells and removing waste products.

Some hormones also utilize your lymphatic system as a transport channel. Given its diverse and essential functions, your lymphatic system's importance to overall health and bodily function cannot be overstated. Nickelston shares key tips on how to unlock your body's detox potential using a six-point lymphatic drainage program.

Your Lymphatic System: Your Body's Unsung Hero

Nickelston began by explaining your lymphatic system's role, noting:¹

"The lymphatic system, it's primarily part of two systems. Your immune system – it's the biggest component of your immune system. And it just so turns out that the largest part of your immune system is in your gut ... and that's also where you find the largest presence of lymphatics.

And it's a major part, which many people forget, of your vascular system, which is your blood flow system. So, if you have an issue with either one of those, blood flow and lymphatics, they're going to go together."

He likened the lymphatic system to a fish tank filter, constantly cleaning out cellular waste and harmful substances like bacteria, viruses and toxins. When this system

becomes stagnant or blocked, it leads to a host of health problems. Nickelston recovered from several of his own health challenges by addressing his lymphatic system:²

"Many years ago, I was very sick and I was having a lot of infections and different types of autoimmune conditions that I never really got an official name for. Honestly, it felt like I had every one that you could possibly list off. It was just inflammation run amok."

After years of struggling with conventional medical approaches, he discovered the power of working with your lymphatic system:³

"Within several days, I made the largest shift in how I felt and my symptoms that I've had probably five years up to that point. And I'm like, 'OK, this is it. This is what I've been looking for. And now I'm just devoting the rest of my life to teaching others that."

An Interconnected Web of Fluids and Signs of Lymphatic Stagnation

Most clinicians consider your kidneys to be the filtration system of your body, not the lymphatics. But as Nickelston explains, your lymphatics facilitate the excretion of toxins to your kidneys to ultimately remove them from the blood. The process involves an interconnected web of fluids. Nickelston explained:⁴

"All these fluids interconnect with each other. So, when you have stuff that comes out through the arterial system, the vascular system, that's the supply side. So, that's going to deliver the nutrients in the oxygen and the things to the cells, but in order to get to the cells, they have to cross through what's called the interstitial fluid. And the lymphatic's job is to keep that fluid clean.

So once the cells use the nutrients, they're going to create energy and they create waste, metabolic waste. If anything, that comes through the capillary,

and that waste has to get out. The veins are going to take some of it, but the particles that are too large won't go into the vein. So, then it has to go into the garbage can of the lymphatic system.

Then the lymphatic system takes it to the lymph nodes, which are these mini toilets throughout the body, and you have about 600 or 700 of them.

And each node kills more things along the pathway. Your immune system bags and tags things that the lymphatics capture and that tells your immune system what something is and what it needs to do about it. And then eventually it's going to dump its way back into the veins, and then it's called plasma.

So, it goes from the veins and then it's going to go from the veins back into the blood flow again, and that's how it's going to make its way to the kidneys. All of these areas intermix with each other. And if you have a backflow in one area, an obstruction or a stagnation, you're going to have backflow in all the other areas because the pressure has to dissipate somewhere."

This interconnection means that problems with lymphatic flow impact everything from your cardiovascular system to your brain health. How can you tell if your lymphatic system is struggling? Nickelston pointed out several key indicators:

Puffiness and swelling, especially above
your collarbones

Recurring infections

Chronic inflammation

Brain fog

Unexplained weight gain

Chronic pain

The 'Big Six' Lymphatic Points



Lymph nodes are strategically clustered around your body's primary joints that are meant to move frequently. These clusters are found at your shoulder joint, hip joint, knee joint, center of your abdomen and the top of your neck – specifically at the first three vertebrae and behind the angle of your jaw.

The purpose of this arrangement is to facilitate lymph movement through joint motion, such as when walking. Nickelston emphasizes that lack of movement in these joints, coupled with poor diaphragmatic breathing, lead to stagnation in your lymphatic system. This is why he recommends focusing on these six primary areas, dubbed the "Big Six," before engaging in movement.

By addressing these key points, you effectively prime your lymphatic system for better function. Nickelston suggested the order is important, but my review suggests the order is not important. The key principle is to move lymph from areas of high pressure to low pressure, always toward your collarbone, which is the ultimate destination for **lymph drainage**:

1. Collarbone area (both sides)
2. Behind the angle of your jaw
3. Shoulder joint/armpit region
4. Abdomen (from sternum to navel)
5. Inguinal lymph nodes (groin area)
6. Behind your knee

"I usually have people do some rubbing. It can be different pressures, it can be light, it can be a little bit deeper, it can be slow, it can be fast," Nickelston says, "just don't cause pain when you do it. If you cause pain when you do it that too means you're pressing too hard and you're likely going to tighten up, which is going to defeat the purpose of you doing the reset."⁵

This routine can be performed before exercise as a "pre-movement workout" and after exercise to facilitate waste removal. The duration can be as quick as one minute for all areas or longer if desired, with each area typically worked on for about 20 seconds.

According to Nickelston, this technique not only primes lymph flow but also improves vein and artery flow and enhances proprioceptive awareness before movement, presenting a simple yet effective way to support your lymphatic system's function in your body.

The Power of Movement

While targeted massage is important, Nickelston also emphasized the role of movement in maintaining lymphatic health, noting, "Humans, were made to move. We're designed to walk. So, you're using your muscles and you're pumping fluids all over the place."⁶ We discussed the benefits of various types of movement, including:

- Walking, including brisk walking with arm swinging
- Rebounding on a mini trampoline
- Dancing and flowing movements
- Hanging exercises

I believe **walking** is the primary exercise that humans were designed to do. If you're doing other forms of exercise and not walking, I encourage you to consider giving yourself more time to walk and do other exercises on top of walking. But with respect to lymphatics, adding in rebounding, dancing, hanging and walking backward allows you to

move up and down, twist and rotate your body to further improve lymphatic circulation.

Nickelston said:⁷

"You should be walking, hopefully brisk enough and without a phone in your hand, so you get some twisting and rotation and torsion in the center of the abdomen, and that moves fluids too. I always tell people envision wringing out a towel; twisting gets fluids to move.

So how about you walk and then you stop for a little bit, then you kind of jump up and down on the balls of your feet because you have built-in rebounders called calves, and you can go up and down like that as well as monitoring your breathing at the same time. Usually, I tell people to keep their mouth closed, breath in and out through their nose, and they'll have more optimal movement of their diaphragm at the same time, and you do your lymphatics.

What I usually teach people is to do those, but then you'll even have a better result when you do some lymphatic work before you walk and before you rebound ... Twisting and turning when you're walking and hanging works really great too. If you can hang from something for a period of time that really begins to open up those ribs along the spine and along the back that get stuck and locked."

Further, lymphatic work complements other [detoxification approaches](#). Combining lymphatic massage with strategies like sauna use, cold plunges and targeted supplementation is highly effective to facilitate detoxification. If this is your focus, an ideal sequence is to massage the Big Six, then use a rebounder and then progress into a [far infrared sauna](#).

Your Lymphatic System's Role in Heart and Brain Health

Your lymphatic health is tied to your overall health, including cardiovascular and brain function. Nickelston explained:⁸

"When your lymphatics are stagnated, you get backflow around the heart too. But that pressure ... from the lymphatics also can revert back into the veins. So, the veins themselves can become stagnant and slow flowing and then that's going to make a difference on the arterial side."

This means addressing lymphatic stagnation is a powerful tool in supporting heart health, especially for those dealing with conditions like mild heart failure. In terms of brain health, Nickelston said:⁹

"What they're finding in relationship to the brain – neuroinflammation, neurodegeneration with Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, MS [multiple sclerosis] and the fluid waste management system of the body, they're tying it more to lymphatics in general, which is great."

This emerging understanding of your lymphatic system's role in brain health could open up new avenues for addressing neurodegenerative diseases. There's also a relationship between lymphatic health and chronic pain. Nickelston explained:¹⁰

"Whenever you're going to have a decrease in the lymphatics being able to get out, you're going to have trapped inflammation around the interstitial fluid because it's stasis. There's an actual term for it called interstitial inflammatory stasis."

This stagnation leads to increased pressure and inflammation, triggering pain responses. Moreover, lymphatic issues impair your body's ability to inhibit pain signals:¹¹

"What you'll also find is that when you have so much inflammation in your body, and even maybe inflammation in your brain and poor blood flow into your brain because of lymphatic stagnation, you lose the ability to efficiently activate the pain inhibition pathway."

This insight offers a new perspective on addressing chronic pain, suggesting that improving lymphatic flow is a key component of pain management.

How to Implement Lymphatic Health Strategies

Be sure to [review the article I posted in the last week](#) that supplements this interview. In terms of practical advice to begin incorporating these insights into your daily life, here are some key takeaways:

1. Start with the Big Six lymphatic massage routine daily, especially before exercise.
2. Prioritize regular movement, including walking, rebounding, hanging and varied motions.
3. Practice deep, diaphragmatic breathing to support lymph flow.
4. Consider integrating lymphatic work with other detox strategies like sauna use.
5. Be patient and persistent, as it may take time to clear long-standing blockages.

While often overlooked, this crucial system plays a vital role in detoxification, immune function and even brain and heart health. What excites me most about this approach is its simplicity and accessibility. With just a few minutes of targeted massage and some mindful movement practices, you unlock significant improvements in your well-being.

A greater focus on lymphatic health is especially useful for those struggling with chronic conditions, inflammation and unexplained health issues. I encourage you to explore these concepts further and consider incorporating these strategies into your own health routine. As always, listen to your body and consult with your health care provider before making significant changes to your health regimen.

By paying attention to this often-neglected system, you'll unlock a powerful key to enhanced vitality, reduced pain and improved overall health. It's a reminder that often, the most profound health solutions are also the simplest.

Sources and References

- [1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 Youtube, Dr. Mercola, Unlocking Your Body's Detox Potential: The Role of Lymphatics – Interview With Dr. Perry Nickelston](#)