

The internet has numerous pages advocating an *Olive Oil - Lemon Juice Liver Cleanse or Detox*. The purpose of the exercise is eliminate gallstones from your gall bladder. The instructions vary but the basics instructions include:

- Mix olive oil and lemon juice together in a blender
- Drink the mixture before bedtime
- Lie down in bed on your right side (sometimes it is the left side) with your knees raised to your chest for 30 minutes

Sometimes apple juice and Epsom salts are involved.

This procedure results in numerous green stones passed in the faeces in the following morning. Unfortunately, the exercise does not remove gallstones and has the potential to cause nausea, severe abdominal pain and may even lead to surgery to remove your gall bladder. It also leads to a false sense of security, giving rise to the belief that you have solved your gallstone problem.

A letter to the editor of *The Lancet*¹ describes the examination of these stones and compares them to surgically removed gallstones. Real gallstones have a crystalline structure and are composed of cholesterol, calcium compounds and bilirubin. Gallstones are yellow in colour and round in shape.

The stones that are passed contain 75% fatty acids and melt at 40°C. They do not contain calcium, cholesterol or bilirubin and are irregular in shape and have a green colour.

Gallstones are difficult to remove once present. A whole-food, plant-based diet reduces the incidence of gallstones. One of the first people to recognise this was Cornelius de Langen. He worked as a doctor in the Dutch East Indies from 1916-1922. He linked diet, serum cholesterol and heart disease by comparing diets of native Javanese and Europeans. He also noted low cholesterol content of bile and the rarity of gallstones in Javanese.

Footnotes

1. Sies, C. W. & Brooker, J. (2005) Could these be gallstones? *Lancet*. 365 (9468), 1388-1388. Available from:
[http://bernard.pitzer.edu/~hfairchi/pdf/psychology/Social%26Diversity/Spitzer\(2005\)ViolentMediaChil.pdf](http://bernard.pitzer.edu/~hfairchi/pdf/psychology/Social%26Diversity/Spitzer(2005)ViolentMediaChil.pdf) (Accessed 13 May 2016).