

Sawbones 66: Enemas and Cleanses

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[theme music plays]

Justin:

Hey everybody, welcome to Sawbones, a marital tour of misguided medicine. I'm your co-host, Justin McElroy.

Sydnee:

And I'm Sydnee McElroy.

Justin:

Oh Sydnee, bad news. I gained two pounds again this week.

Sydnee:

Oh, I'm sorry, honey.

Justin:

It's all right, but—

Sydnee:

It's that time of year. There's just so much good stuff to eat and it's so cold. You don't want to go outside.

Justin:

You watch though. Next year, soon as next year rolls around, uh, I'm gonna, I'm gonna get out there, I'm gonna get this ship righted. I'm gonna ride the—

Sydnee:

That's good. We got, we got a kid to take care of. We gotta get in shape.

Justin:

I know. I'm gonna ride the bike.

Sydnee:

Okay. What else are you gonna do?

Justin:

I'm gonna eat a little healthier, you know?

Sydnee:

Okay. I like those things. Those are both good ideas.

Justin:

And of course gonna kick it off right with a giganto cleanse.

Sydnee:

With a cleanse?

Justin:

Lemon juice, honey, mint, water, Tabasco, cleanse it.

Sydnee:

Where did you—

Justin:

Blow it out.

Sydnee:

Oh, ew. Where did you hear about that?

Justin:

TV, probably. I don't know. I don't keep track of that kind of stuff. That's just errata.

Sydnee:

And what are you trying to accomplish?

Justin:

Cleanse it.

Sydnee:

Like, I know but what... Okay. So it's a cleanse—

Justin:

Blow it out.

Sydnee:

... but like, like... right. I mean, that's graphic, but what—

Justin:

You ever go in your, uh, your, your attic and just clean all the cobwebs out and just blow it all out?

Sydnee:

No, I've never cleaned the cobwebs out of the attic. I'm terrified of our attic but—

Justin:

Yeah, but like, what if you weren't? You'd probably get up there and just blow it out, you know?

Sydnee:

I don't, I don't, um... So you think that there are cobwebs inside your colon that you're—

Justin:

No.

Sydnee:

... trying to—

Justin:

Metaphorical, meat-based, uh, cobwebs from just like all the terrible food I've been eating.

Sydnee:

Right. This is already I can see going to be the grossest episode we've ever done.

Justin:

What's the problem with cleanses?

Sydnee:

If teeth really bothered you.

Justin:

What's the problem with cleanses?

Sydnee:

Well, a—

Justin:

I just want to blow it out.

Sydnee:

Okay. Well, how about we talk about cleanses. Let's talk about, let's talk about all things, uh, colonic.

Justin:

All right. Hit me.

Sydnee:

Let's talk about cleanses. Let's talk about constipation. Let's talk about some enemas. What do you think?

Justin:

Cleanses are hot right now. I can't imagine they're an, an, uh, an old person thing. They're so now. I feel like they probably came or invented like five years ago.

Sydnee:

No. But first, before I tell you how long, how old they are, let me go ahead and thank two people.

Justin:

Okay.

Sydnee:

Um, Beth and Aaron. Uh, the reason I thank both of you is that, uh, one of you suggested constipation, one of you suggested cleanses, and we're gonna talk about both.

Justin:

Oh.

Sydnee:

So thank you so much.

Justin:

Blowing both out.

Sydnee:

Yeah. So, uh, Justin, as you, um, mistakenly guessed, the idea of a cleanse is not new. It is very old. The idea is actually ancient. Um, the Egyptians believed that food could collect in your gut and start to rot. And if it was in there too long, it would begin to release toxins, uh, into your body and then into your blood stream as well.

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

This was the concept of autointoxication. Meaning this, you know, you were intoxicating yourself from the inside out basically from the stuff you were eating. Uh, and this i— this idea, which the ancient Egyptians came up with permeates the idea of a cleanse all the way up to current, current concepts of, of colon health, which is kind of fascinating.

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

Uh, the Egyptians used enemas mainly. Um, a lot of, uh, colonic lavages. So like s— Do you, do you know what an enema is? Do you understand the concept of an enema?

Justin:

They put a tube in your bottom—

Sydnee:

Mm-hmm.

Justin:

... and then they just blow it out.

Sydnee:

They blow it out? [laugh]

Justin:

They shoot water in there.

Sydnee:

Right. And, and the, and when we're talking about enemas as opposed to people who get colonic irrigation and colonic hydrotherapy and that kind of thing, it's really just how far up you're going. An enema does not go very far. Um, yeah, it pis—you can give yourself an enema at home. Certainly, we give them to patients in the hospital. It, it just cleans out the last bit of the colon, whereas a, a high colonic so to speak would clean out like a lot more of the colon.

Um, but yeah, we just squirt water, or the Egyptians used various herbal, you know, concoctions and just squirt it up there and let it run back out and take all of the toxins with it—

Justin:

Perfect.

Sydnee:

... was the basic idea. Uh, the Greeks also thought that this was true. Um, and this makes sense if you think about the idea of the four humors, you know?

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

They spent a lot of time trying to get stuff out of their body through various orifices.

Justin:

Get it all balanced.

Sydnee:

Right.

Justin:

Get it out whatever hole necessary.

Sydnee:

Exactly. So you know, sometimes that involved making yourself throw up, but then other times you had to, you know, get it out the back door.

Justin:

Right. Whatever, whatever it took.

Sydnee:

So, um—

Justin:

Take no prisoners.

Sydnee:

[laughs] So you could do an enema for just about anything. Um, Hippocrates would recommend them for fevers. So anything that ailed you, you could go ahead and try an enema. Why not? Uh, they mainly used pure water enemas. And they prescribed them for—

Justin:

Better than dirty, I think. Better than dirty water enemas.

Sydnee:

If there was someone throughout history who prescribed dirty water enemas—

Justin:

Not, don't trust that guy.

Sydnee:

... I don't... I'm not—

Justin:

Don't trust that doctor.

Sydnee:

... I'm not aware of them, but they didn't add anything to it for the most part. Uh, they were just saying, "No, no, no, no, just squirt that water up your butt." Um, and they, like I said, they prescribed it for fevers but also for headaches, asthma, colds, for childbirth, which was something that continued throughout history, the idea that a woman needed an enema before childbirth.

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

And that's fairly recent. That's something that... I think we've mentioned that before that, um, your moms or your, your grandmas might mention, "Oh, yeah, before you give birth you have to have an enema." We don't do that anymore, but we did for a long time.

Justin:

Hmm.

Sydnee:

Um, and along with the, the medical benefits of enemas, throughout these cultures in particular that we've already talked about, enemas had, uh, a religious significance. A cleanse of any kind had a religious significance. So, the easiest way you could cleanse yourself, and I think a lot of us are familiar with the significance of this, is fasting.

Justin:

Oh, yeah.

Sydnee:

So, you know.

Justin:

That's similar, right?

Sydnee:

Right.

Justin:

You're not blowing anything up there, but you're just keeping anything new from going in.

Sydnee:

Right. So just like, you know, fasting was a way to kind of purify yourself and, uh, uh, clean yourself out, so to speak, spiritually in preparation for some kind of religious feast or something. Um, you could instead just, you know, instead of having to not eat for so long to clean your body out, just clean it all out at once.

Justin:

Speedy. It's a speedy, speedy cleanse.

Sydnee:

And in that way, you are not just purging yourself of physical toxins, but the idea was that you were, uh, purging yourself of spiritual toxins. Because sometimes after a prolonged fast or a particularly righteous cleanse [laughs]—

Justin:

Super great cleanse.

Sydnee:

... you may feel that you have ascended to a higher level of consciousness.

Justin:

Or, or hungriness.

Sydnee:

Yes. You're probably just delirious from hunger, dehydration, and electrolyte imbalance.

Justin:

Might as well shoot some water up there.

Sydnee:

So—

Justin:

That's going to set you right as rain.

Sydnee:

And it, it was used in religious ceremonies.

Justin:

Not formal ones, I'm assuming.

Sydnee:

Yes, formal religious ceremonies.

Justin:

Oh, man.

Sydnee:

Yes. It was incorporated. And that's in varied parts of the world. In Egypt and India, China, in ancient Babylon, in, in various parts of Africa, in their, you know, religious ceremonies, you would stop and [laughs] just—

Justin:

Just.

Sydnee:

... you know, uh, blow it all out, as you said.

Justin:

Presumably after the offering, that is the time you wanna do that.

Sydnee:

[laughs] Can you—

Justin:

You don't want them thinking like, "Oh, this church... we have to change churches, Valerie."

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

"This place is terrible."

Sydnee:

Can you imagine the people who were like they just move to town and they were like, "Well, we need to find a church."

Justin:

We, we need to—

Sydnee:

"Why don't we just... Let's just try some—"

Justin:

Let's just—

Sydnee:

"... different ones and see which one suits us, you know? We were like—"

Justin:

Maybe Our Lady of what are you doing back there?

Sydnee:

[laughs] I can't, uh... Being raised Catholic, I can't really imagine how that would fit into the religious ceremony. And so—

Justin:

It's snug. Let me put it that way.

Sydnee:

[laughs] Um, I, you know, it's just, it's all very quiet and peaceful. And I imagine... I mean, I don't know if your, what, what kind of noises accompany like mass enemas.

Justin:

I don't wanna think about the noises that accompany mass enemas. Thank you.

Sydnee:

[laughs] That wasn't part of your, your early religious—

Justin:

You work in an audio-only format. We need to have a little more respect for foley on this program. You do not need that particular sound effect to be replicated.

Sydnee:

Do you think this is, is worse or better than snake handling? Would you be more likely to go to a church—

Justin:

Oh, man.

Sydnee:

... that might force you to participate in snake handling than force you to participate in an enema?

Justin:

It depends on if I am the recipient or the deliverer of the enema. If I have to be on the receiving end, I'd take a snake. If I had to deliver it, I probably just go for it.

Sydnee:

Is this a thing like you wanna... I mean, was there's something did you want to give—

Justin:

No, I'm just... you, you gave me the either/or, so there it is.

Sydnee:

... enemas to strangers. Is that—

Justin:

No, you gave me the either/or. I'm just picking a binary choice. Given my druthers, I'd rather stay at home and watch football on Sundays because I love sports.

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

Don't laugh.

Sydnee:

Uh, in... so as far as how they administered these enemas, that was one thing that interested me. Um, most of the time, especially, um, in some parts of Africa they found these. They would use like a hollowed out animal bone or like a cow horn to administer the enema...

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

... which is a very undignified end for an animal, I have to say.

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

You know?

Justin:

Although the person's end is pretty undignified at that point too.

Sydnee:

[laughs] So you got a cow horn sticking out of your butt.

Justin:

Yeah. You probably didn't think about shake out that way.

Sydnee:

I keep picturing one of those cornucopias that you get to like decorate your table scape at Thanksgiving.

Justin:

Yeah?

Sydnee:

I mean, I guess you don't put all the fruits and dates—

Justin:

No, I think you probably wanna...

Sydnee:

... and nuts and stuff and...

Justin:

I think you probably wanna, uh, probably that probably needs to go to recycling.

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

You're probably done with that after a single use, I would think.

Sydnee:

The horn of plenty. [laughs]

Justin:

Oh, come on, Sydnee.

Sydnee:

Sorry. [laughs]

Justin:

You're so yucky.

Sydnee:

Uh, so the first enema syringe, the first formal enema administering device shows up in 1000 AD.

Justin:

Wow.

Sydnee:

So a pretty long time ago. I tried to figure out who invented it, and it's actually a subject of debate who exactly was responsible.

Justin:

I bet not a lot of people were clamoring to take credit for that.

Sydnee:

Well, that was kinda my thought is that it's not, it's not that there were so many people who wanted the credit for it. It was, everybody was kinda like, I don't know. I've may have...

Justin:

It was Doug's idea.

Sydnee:

I'm sure somebody did it first. It was not, you know, the—

Justin:

It's not important.

Sydnee:

... that... You don't need to put my name on it.

Justin:

No. It's a, it's a real team—

Sydnee:

Oh, man, what if your name was on it?

Justin:

It was real team effort.

Sydnee:

What if you call it like the Justin device?

Justin:

I can't, dude. No.

Sydnee:

I'm gonna need the Justin device. [laughs] Quick.

Justin:

I deserve better.

Sydnee:

Nurse, stat, Justin device [laughs] to room five.

Justin:

Me Justin.

Sydnee:

Um, so there was another popular apparatus in addition to the enema syringe, which basically was a syringe that squirted water up your butt. I mean, it had a little tube on it. It's not much more complicated than that. And when I say syringe, you know I don't mean needle.

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

Okay. Just making sure.

Justin:

I'm with you.

Sydnee:

Just clarifying. There's no needle involved. It's tubing.

Justin:

Thank God.

Sydnee:

Uh, there was another apparatus, uh, that had a tube that was, again, usually made of bone of so—like a hollowed out leg bone of an animal. Uh, and then you would get like a bag that typically was an animal bladder. So then you would attach the animal bladder to the tube and squeeze the bladder that is filled with liquid. You know.

Justin:

Through the tube and into the—

Sydnee:

Through the tube.

Justin:

... bottom.

Sydnee:

And if you picture that in your head, you—

Justin:

Nope.

Sydnee:

... [laughs] you may imagine that it looks a little like a bagpipe.

Justin:

Yeah, that would be my... yeah, that's about what I'm visualizing.

Sydnee:

So in Spain, this was called playing the bagpipes.

Justin:

Ugh.

Sydnee:

So, you could say that I need to go... I'm sorry, I'm gonna have to go the restroom and play the bagpipes. [laughs]

Justin:

[laughs]

Sydnee:

Um, they also begin to refer to this, the bag as a clyster purse. Clyster became kind of the word for enemas. So there are clyster syringes.

Justin:

Hmm.

Sydnee:

And this, this persists for many hundreds of years.

Justin:

Huh.

Sydnee:

Um, and there are, uh... in most of the time you would use, you know, just kinda gravity to make everything happen. So you'd probably wanna be laying down and like lift the bag up and you know, you wouldn't wanna apply a lot of pressure, you know. You can damage things.

Justin:

Right.

Sydnee:

So you just kinda let the water run in, and then stand up and let it run back out. It's kind of a gravity thing, right? Well, in some religious ceremonies I guess you want a little more, I don't know, pomp. [laughs] So you would designate some people as blowers, and you can go ahead and guess what—

Justin:

No, thank you.

Sydnee:

... their job was.

Justin:

I'm gonna guess blowing.

Sydnee:

Yes.

Justin:

Squeezing the bladder to make the air come out.

Sydnee:

Exactly.

Justin:

And you got to work your way up in that position though.

Sydnee:

And then, and now that squeeze it to make the, to, to force—

Justin:

Make the water come out, right?

Sydnee:

... the liquid up above faster.

Justin:

You don't put water in there. That's so good.

Sydnee:

Which is dangerous. You don't wanna do that, you know. The colon could perforate. You'd get a hole in it if you blasted water there too hard, you know.

Justin:

[laughs] Gotta be very ginger.

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

Take a light touch blowers.

Sydnee:

You need to be careful what you do. And most of time again, you know, different cultures are using just mainly water. Like I said, sometimes they have an herbal substance enema but, but largely just water. In some Mayan celebrations though, they would throw in something that would be kind of fun like alcohol or something that would be hallucinogenic, which you would then absorb in your system. So you'd get the enema, which, I don't know,

did, do you enjoy that? Maybe you did. And then you get really high afterwards.

Justin:

From the...

Sydnee:

The stuff you just shot up your butt.

Justin:

[laughs] I just wanted to make you say it.

Sydnee:

[laughs] And I think the, is, wasn't that a fad in the recent years? Like not that but—

Justin:

Kids.

Sydnee:

... but I think there were, was women who were putting things soaked in alcohol.

Justin:

Vodka-soaked tampons.

Sydnee:

Yes. Yes. Wasn't that a thing?

Justin:

I feel like that's a Snopes thing. I don't know if that actually was going on.

Sydnee:

I would love to know if that was fake, 'cause I heard that a lot. It was something that was talked about in like medical circles like, "You gotta be careful now. The kids are using—"

Justin:

Doing this.

Sydnee:

"... [laughs] Vodka-soaked tampons, and you don't wanna if that... the— they'll come in drunk and you won't know why."

Justin:

[laughs] And then you'll figure it out—

Sydnee:

Yeah.

Justin:

Be like, "Whoa, very innovative."

Sydnee:

This was not a move by the way. We were not, this was not... No one suggested that we start checking out girls for vodka-soaked tampons. This is not a thing.

Justin:

Yeah.

Sydnee:

No. No. This young med student who maybe listening, please don't do that.

Justin:

Yeah, like—

Sydnee:

You'll get kick out of medical school.

Justin:

... it would won't go well.

Sydnee:

No. Uh, the Native Americans also added substances to their enemas, uh, tobacco was the most popular. And they used this for a variety of illnesses. I think I mentioned this in, um, our, when we talked about tuberculosis. It was used for tuberculosis. It doesn't work.

Justin:

No.

Sydnee:

Uh, but they also just used that for fun to absorb a whole lot of tobacco really quickly.

Justin:

[laughs]

Sydnee:

That was [laughs] also, it just felt good, I guess. It ju— they felt better—

Justin:

It just—

Sydnee:

... afterwards.

Justin:

It smells great.

Sydnee:

Oh, it's like you can... like smoking with your butt.

Justin:

It's like smoking with your butt, tobacco enemas.

Sydnee:

Is that something... As a former smoker, is that something that all smokers dream of doing someday?

Justin:

Finally, the smooth refreshing taste of tobacco injected in my butt.

Sydnee:

[laughs] Is that what you'd always dreamed would happen?

Justin:

No, dear.

Sydnee:

Oh, okay.

Justin:

No.

Sydnee:

Well, I don't know.

Justin:

No. That's not really how it works.

Sydnee:

[laughs] Uh, the enema... so I, as we're moving through history, the enema is popular. It's mainly something that used in religious ceremonies, but everybody kinda uses it every now and then if their doctor tells them to. But in the 1300s and moving in to the 1400s it, it just blew up, so to speak, uh, especially after King Louis XI was saved from death supposedly by an enema.

Justin:

Yeah.

Sydnee:

He had some sort of an attack. I don't know of what. And because it's old—timey, and so they, you know, throw words around that don't really mean anything.

Justin:

Right.

Sydnee:

But his doctor prescribed an enema. He had it, and he got better.

Justin:

It's a mi— it's a miracle cure.

Sydnee:

So he began having regular enemas administered, and he even would have his dogs receive enemas periodically.

Justin:

It's a noble job for guy who had to do that.

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

Big ups to you.

Sydnee:

Can you imagine the poor guy in his court who was like, "You, you're the dog enema guy. I dub thee sir dog enema." [laughs]

Justin:

I'll go get some more tube. Be back later.

Sydnee:

Um, and then from here, enemas really took off. By the 17th century, uh, it wasn't— that was known as the age of the enema—

Justin:

[laughs]

Sydnee:

... or the age of the [laughs] clyster as it was known.

Justin:

Take that, Renaissance.

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

Take that, take that, Iron Age.

Sydnee:

Age of the enema. There were lots of different enema syringes at that point that you could, uh, that you could purchase. If you were less wealthy, you may just get a plain copper or porcelain syringe. Uh, rich people had large collections of enemas, mother-of-pearl and silver enema syringes, I should say.

Uh, King Louis XIII had more than 200 enemas a year. Uh, and some people would have multiple times a day. Um, it was really though King Louis XIV, the Sun King who... I don't know. Maybe the, maybe we should call him the enema king because he was the biggest fan of enemas. Uh, they were so

commonplace at that point that he would actually hold court and meet with advisors while receiving enemas.

Justin:

You know, it's intimidating enough when you meet royalty, uh, who understands their, their, uh, manners, their, their etiquette. There's a lot you have to keep in your head. But man, there is no better power play than, than having people come to the throne room, and you are just getting water blasted in your butt.

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

Power play.

Sydnee:

Do you... at that point, I wonder if like—

Justin:

The executive move, more like.

Sydnee:

Do you think you're supposed to also?

Justin:

Should I join you, your worship?

Sydnee:

Or is that, uh, a huge faux pas.

Justin:

Room on that tube for two, King Lou. Don't mind if I do.

Sydnee:

[laughs] That would be much trickier. You know, uh, Prince William and Kate just came to the US.

Justin:

They got an—

Sydnee:

Did you hear about this?

Justin:

They got an enema.

Sydnee:

No, they didn't get. [laughs] No. I'm not spreading rumors.

Justin:

That dual enema.

Sydnee:

They didn't get an enema. No, they met, oh, a basketball player, and he put his arm around her. Did you not read about this?

Justin:

No. No, I don't, I don't keep up from the latest.

Sydnee:

He put his arm around her to pose for a picture, and apparently that's a big no-no—

Justin:

I did not know this.

Sydnee:

... that, that, so... but I, I was reading about this. So that's a violation of royal etiquette, but it doesn't apply to us Americans 'cause we don't know any better. [laughs]

Justin:

That's right.

Sydnee:

So...

Justin:

We don't, we don't serve them. We fought for our right to put our arm around Kate Middleton.

Sydnee:

[laughs] So we're not in trouble for it, I guess. The basketball players gonna get off okay.

Justin:

Thank God.

Sydnee:

But if he had walked in and they were both getting enemas, how would he have reacted? I don't know.

Justin:

He wouldn't put his arm around her, that's for damn sure.

Sydnee:

Probably not. He probably would stay away from that. Uh, but anyway, the Sun King had over 2000 enemas in his career as king. He claimed that it made him live longer, and he did reign for a very long time so—

Justin:

Proof positive.

Sydnee:

... gosh, who knows. Uh, and, and there, it was very popular among the upper crust at this point. A lot of, uh, fine ladies would do this mainly for their complexions. Um, and they could either do them to them to themselves. They made this little enema syringes that had bent tips, so that you could, you know, kinda reach around and administer your own enema, or you could have your ladies in waiting administer your enema. Or if you're really modest, they came with these, uh, buttocks covers.

Justin:

Oh, that's nice. A little dainty enema.

Sydnee:

So that you can, you can kinda... I don't, I can't even imagine what that must have looked like, but you cover your butt and then administer the enema through it. I guess there's like a hole in it or something, so nobody looks at your butt while you do it.

Justin:

Perfect. Now w— I imagine we're, we're getting closer to the modern era. What about the 1800s? What did those, what did those hold for enemas?

Sydnee:

Well, let's take a quick pause before we visit the 1800s and make a side journey with me to the billing department.

Justin:

Let's go.

[theme music plays]

[ad break]

Justin:

1800 said, "Hit me. I'm ready. I'm ready for the, the, the future past of enemas."

Sydnee:

So up and to this point, you know, doctors were prescribing enemas certainly, uh, but nobody was really sure. I mean, they were also kind of a fad, so nobody was really sure if they worked or not. Um, and that kind of changed with the endorsement by Nobel Prize winner Ilya Mechnikov, who was a really smart guy who discovered macrophages, which there are a lot of science-y people and biologists and stuff who are going, "Wow," right now. And you're just looking at me blankly.

Justin:

Yeah.

Sydnee:

But it's really important.

Justin:

Okay. I'll buy it.

Sydnee:

Yeah.

Justin:

I'll, I'll take your word for it.

Sydnee:

And, so h— the point is he's a really smart guy who also, you know, and we— I think this is a recurring theme on our show. A really smart person who won a Nobel Prize for something awesome but then also kinda dabbled in something that's a little—

Justin:

Sketchier?

Sydnee:

... a little weird.

Justin:

They're looking for their next hit. They don't wanna get into a sophomore slump.

Sydnee:

[laughs] Th— This, this—

Justin:

But how they gonna follow up that thing he did?

Sydnee:

This is his vitamin C. He [laughs]—

Justin:

Right.

Sydnee:

So he also believed in the idea of autointoxication. Uh, he believed that the enema was very important or, or colonic hydrotherapy, some way to remove toxins from the gut and started, uh, writing about and talking about the importance of, you know, getting all of these toxic substances out of your colon to maintain good health.

And this gave it a lot of legitimacy that it didn't have up until then. Uh, and this probably helped keep it alive despite the fact that as we move in to the 1900s, it has really begun to fall out of favor with the medical community at large because laxatives have been invented. So if, if you're constipated, if they think that you need to be cleaned out, they just prescribe you a laxative.

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

They're not gonna tell you to, you know...

Justin:

Blow it out.

Sydnee:

Exactly [laughs] Eh, which would, you would think would make sense. You'd think most patients would prefer that. Like here, just drink this MiraLax as opposed let me squirt this stuff up your butt.

Justin:

Then you gotta be on the toilet forever. It's just such a hassle though.

Sydnee:

Well, and they, and this, because of the, you know, endorsement by Mechnikov as well as the fact that for whatever reason, the wealthy and the famous were still huge fans of enemas. Uh, and so I think that, you know—and we, we've talked about this with other things. If the upper crust is doing it, everybody else figures it's a good idea too.

Justin:

This is probably the purest example of that particular—

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

... grift.

Sydnee:

And we've talked about before we did a whole episode on Dr. Kellogg—

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

... and his yogurt enemas. Remember that?

Justin:

Yeah.

Sydnee:

He prescribed yogurt enemas. And that was exactly the kind of person who would endorse the enema. It was, you know, the upper crust who would go visit somewhere like the, you know, the Kellogg, what was it, Kellogg Institute.

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

Uh, and this was also along the same, around the same time when colonic hydrotherapy really came into vogue. And, and we've already kinda mentioned that, but it's basically the difference between an enema which is just a small amount of liquid that you, you used like a little, like the little bulb syringe that we use to clean out Charlie's nose.

Justin:

Oh, yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

Sydnee:

Kind of a larger version of that with some tubing—

Justin:

Yeah.

Sydnee:

... and you squirt it up there. Colonic hydrotherapy involved machinery and lots of tubing and lots of liquid.

Justin:

Like a reverse milking machine, basically.

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

To paint that picture for you.

Sydnee:

Well, I mean, you sta— it stops at some point. It doesn't just pump you completely full of, full of water.

Justin:

Unless it goes crazy and we reach the singularity, and the machine outsmarts humans, and then it does. And it does it to everybody. Checkmate. Terminator, Judgment Day.

Sydnee:

[laughs] That—

Justin:

Extended director's cut.

Sydnee:

That's what it's really the story of it.

Justin:

Yeah.

Sydnee:

It's the story of the day—

Justin:

It's a story of a new Terminator movie.

Sydnee:

... that the high colonic machine became sentient and took over [laughs] the world.

Justin:

Fudgement day, they call it.

Sydnee:

Ew, really?

Justin:

Sorry. I did my best.

Sydnee:

Really?

Justin:

I did my best.

Sydnee:

Um, you know, puns are outlawed in China now. You can't say that kind of thing.

Justin:

I did not know that.

Sydnee:

Yeah. So, uh, this was so popular, and you may have heard of this that in Hollywood, colonics were a big deal, and there's a... I have learned this from doing this podcast. I guess there's a particularly famous road by Beverley Boulevard in California.

Justin:

Is that where everybody goes to get them done?

Sydnee:

Yes. Well, in the '50s, that's where you would go to get them done.

Justin:

Hmm.

Sydnee:

So it was known as colonic row because there were so many places that offered colonics to the stars.

Justin:

Awesome.

Sydnee:

Uh, the... So like I said, um, the high colonic is still done today. Most of the time, they're just flushing you out with water, but they may or may not add some sort of herbal thing too it. Uh, now the equipment that they use is regulated by the FDA because it is a, a procedure that has risk involved. Uh, but whatever their doing to you is not regulated by the FDA. So, uh, it's not like we prescribe high colonics to people. That's just not, not something that we would do.

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

It's not a... well, you know, certainly, I would prescribe an enema to somebody maybe because they need a, um, because they're completely constipated and, and sick from it, or sometimes we do that. Uh, well, we don't use enema so much, but we clean people out before colonoscopies.

Justin:

Right. Yeah.

Sydnee:

So we can get a clear view, that kind of thing. Um, but we do not prescribe high colonics. Uh, and you gotta be careful if you're gonna have somebody do one because as I mentioned, the speed with which they, you know, squirt the water up there, if it's too much could perforate or, or, you know, tear a hole in the side of your colon. Which—

Justin:

Let a professional do it, folks.

Sydnee:

Yeah. Yeah, sort of—

Justin:

Don't, don't get cheap.

Sydnee:

Or, or don't do it.

Justin:

Or don't do it.

Sydnee:

Or maybe don't. [laughs]

Justin:

That's another alternative, I guess.

Sydnee:

That's another alternative. But if you are going to do it, I would make sure that it is somebody who does it regularly, who has equipment that is, has been approved by the FDA. Um, that they use—

Justin:

Not just a Super Soaker. Okay? Don't be fooled.

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

Get real equipment.

Sydnee:

Yeah, I don't even think you can get Super Soakers anymore.

Justin:

Well then, I mean, if they, if they been saving theirs. If they're kept on a shelf pristine for this exact occasion.

Sydnee:

[laughs] Just for this. But see, your bigger problem there is that you're probably gonna introduce weird bacteria into your colon if you use a Super Soaker.

Justin:

That's true. A lot of hose water in there.

Sydnee:

So that's the other thing. It seems like the, the butt's kind of a dirty place. And so it wouldn't really matter i— if more bacteria got up there, uh, but it absolutely does. You don't wanna introduce weird bacteria into your colon.

Justin:

Right. Yeah.

Sydnee:

So—

Justin:

No new special unique bacteria.

Sydnee:

No. So you wanna make sure that the mat— so the equipment is approved, and that everything they're using is sterile and clean, 'cause it could kill you if it's done wrong.

Justin:

Ugh.

Sydnee:

Um, and I've, I've discovered this too. Some people do it for like, like sexy reasons.

Justin:

Oh, like kink. Like it turns them on.

Sydnee:

Yeah. It's like a thing.

Justin:

Cool.

Sydnee:

Like I guess that's, the, some, some prostitutes will provide that service for you, you know.

Justin:

Very cool. Just like be super safe. Again, just be safe.

Sydnee:

Uh, yeah. That's the main thing. Make sure everything's clean.

Justin:

Yup.

Sydnee:

Um, uh, in addition to this in modern times, it's, we prescribe a variety of cleanses. Well, we don't prescribe them. The internet prescribes you a variety of cleanses for weight loss, as well as constipation and detoxification. Um, the cleanse I think you were referencing, at least in part was the master cleanse, Justin.

Justin:

Yes, the master cleanse which I think is like I— I think I'm not making it up completely. I do think there's like lemon juice and water and like Tabasco sauce or hot sauce I—

Sydnee:

It's right there in my notes if you want to—

Justin:

Oh, I'm not gonna scope your notes.

Sydnee:

Okay.

Justin:

Uh, that'll be cheating.

Sydnee:

Well, I know. Well, you're close with lemon juice, cayenne pepper—

Justin:

Yeah, that's it.

Sydnee:

... maple syrup and saltwater.

Justin:

That's what I was thinking of.

Sydnee:

So, uh, so that's the master cleanse. There are also cleanses that involved just juice. Um, and then a lot of like herbal things like cleanses with like wormwood and senna and cilium.

Justin:

I've looked into a lot of juice fasts before. I tried it once until I got hungry that day. But I know people... my friend Dave was on one for like 60 days. It was crazy.

Sydnee:

And I will tell you this, it's not anything... from a medical standpoint, we're never gonna tell you like, "You know what you need to do, you need to do a cleanse." Or at least, I will say that as not an accepted medical treatment. I'm certain there are doctors who recommend it. It's not part of our standard care.

Justin:

Right.

Sydnee:

Um, I have no reason to think that your body can't detoxify itself. You have organs specifically for that. [laughs] So, don't worry about the detoxification. That's not really a thing that happens as far as the idea that food's rotting in your system and, and creating toxins and you need to clean them out.

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

Um, obviously, constipation makes you feel lousy and can make you sick, and there are lots of medicines for it. Um, the solution is never a high colonic or a cleanse for that matter.

Justin:

Yeah.

Sydnee:

Uh, cleanses can cause electrolyte imbalances. They can cause you to become dehydrated. They can be very dangerous. And there's no nutrients. So if you're doing it for a long time, you're missing things.

Justin:

Yeah.

Sydnee:

There are things your body is not getting that it needs. Um, there also today in addition to the colonic hydrotherapy or just water, there are, there are versions that use clay, that use saltwater, that use glycerin.

Justin:

I don't trust any of those, honestly.

Sydnee:

I, I wouldn't. Yeah. And it, and it's, it I— does continued to be used as part of alternative medicine therapy.

Justin:

Hmm.

Sydnee:

Uh, one last thing that is still popular even though it was first recommended in 1917. So this has really persisted is the coffee enema.

Justin:

What's the rationale there?

Sydnee:

The idea initially was that, yes, it cleaned out the colon, but the more important thing was that it would so-called stimulate your liver. Um, I don't know how the caffeine would stimulate your liver, but that was the perceived benefit.

Justin:

Okay.

Sydnee:

Nowadays, people use it mainly just to clean them out, detoxify. That's the idea. But there have been some claims that it can cure cancer.

Justin:

Perfect.

Sydnee:

Now, Justin.

Justin:

Sydnee.

Sydnee:

Do you think a coffee enema cures cancer?

Justin:

No, dear, I don't.

Sydnee:

And see, you didn't even need a medical degree to know that.

Justin:

Nope. I just eyeballed it and just kinda took a shot in the dark.

Sydnee:

Uh, coffee enemas have killed people.

Justin:

Okay.

Sydnee:

Um—

Justin:

Well, that's a knock against them, I think.

Sydnee:

Yes, yes. So you, you risk dehydration. You risk electrolyte imbalance. You risk infection. Uh, you also, I've read reports where people will do it when the coffee's still too hot.

Justin:

Oh, come on.

Sydnee:

You can imagine the problems that would result from that.

Justin:

If you're gonna do it, at least don't use instant. You're better than that. Get something fresh ground.

Sydnee:

When we use enemas, we generally don't. You know, in the hospital, we're generally using either soap suds or just water enemas. We're not putting like a bunch of stuff up your butt.

Justin:

We don't need a lot of foreign material up there.

Sydnee:

Yeah. So it's not a good idea to do that. In general, just don't. Don't, just don't do that.

Justin:

Just don't do that.

Sydnee:

No.

Justin:

Folks, thank you so much for listening to our program today. Uh, we hope you had fun listening to it. Thanks for you for tweeting about our show. @Sawbones is our Twitter handle. Folks like Claw PHD, Heather, Danielle Gallant, Dylan Kane, Nick Taylor, Wormish Crow, Melissa Ranks, Kevin Rushing, Anna Lisa, Jason Parkasera Rasinki, uh, December Doggy, Olivia Hutton, so many others, thank you, thank you, thank you. We sure appreciate it. Um, make sure to follow us, um, on Twitter there too. @Sawbones is the, uh, is, is our, is our handle on the, on, on the internet. Uh—

Sydnee:

There's also @JustinMcElroy.

Justin:

And—

Sydnee:

Go and check him out.

Justin:

And she's @Sydnee McElroy, S-Y-D-N-E-E M-C-E-L-R-O-Y. And, uh, what else do we have? Thanks to The Taxpayers for letting us using their song Medicines for our intro and outro of our program.

Sydnee:

If you have any suggestions or topics or things you'd like to talk about, please email us.

Justin:

It's, uh, sawbones@maximumfun.org. Speaking of Maximum Fun, Sydnee, there's a ton of great programs over there for you to listen to.

Sydnee:

That's right.

Justin:

Uh, we got a new one this week to talk about. Um, two new Maximum Fun podcast. One, uh, by, by me and my brothers and one by my brother Travis. I wanna talk about his show instead of our new one, The Adventure Zone. Travis and Andy Bunker Buddies is a show by, uh, Travis and his, uh, buddy Andy out there in LA as they talk about different disaster scenarios and how you can survive them. Uh, just go to maximumfun.org and just search for Bunker Buddies. You can find that one there.

Sydnee:

So check that out. The, the McElroy family is basically trying to dominate podcasting.

Justin:

That's right, Sydnee. We're, one step at a time. We gonna—

Sydnee:

That's our— We're gonna conquer the world one podcast at a time.

Justin:

Uh, if you got chance to go, rate review Sawbones on iTunes, that would be super nice of you to do. Uh, and, uh, that's gonna do it for us here on, uh, on Sawbones. Oh, oh, oh, we're, uh, doing a live show with My Brother, My Brother and Me, uh, December 21st, in Huntington, West Virginia, our home town. If you want tickets to that, uh, you can get them at bit.ly/candlenightlive. They are \$15, and they are going fast. So if you want them, uh, you'll be joining a ton of people from all over the country and Canada and Switzerland who are [laughs] coming out to the show so you should, uh, you should definitely do that. It's gonna be a blast.

Sydnee:

And this is, this is your chance. If you've been waiting, thinking, ah, got to get the Huntington, West Virginia. I've never been there. I've heard so much about it.

Justin:

Finally have an excuse.

Sydnee:

It's like on my list of places you gotta see before you die, this is your chance.

Justin:

This your chance. So come and do it. Uh, that's gonna do it for us. Uh, until next Tuesday, I'm Justin McElroy.

Sydnee:

I'm Sydnee McElroy.

Justin:

As always, don't drill a hole in your head.

[theme music plays]

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