

Intermittent Fasting for Beginners

modified after the book by Dr. Jason Fung: "The Obesity Code"

The WHAT and WHY

Intermittent fasting vs starvation

Fasting differs from starvation in one crucial way. Control.

Starvation is the *involuntary* absence of food. It is neither deliberate, nor controlled.

Fasting, on the other hand is the *voluntary* withholding of food for spiritual, health, or other reasons.

Food is easily available, but you *choose* not to eat it. This can be for any period of time, from a few hours up to days or even weeks on end. You may begin a fast at any time of your choosing, and you may end a fast at will, too. You can start or stop a fast for any reason, or no reason at all.

Fasting has no standard duration since it is merely the absence of eating. Anytime that you are not eating, you are fasting. For example, you may fast between dinner and breakfast the next day, a period of approximately 12-14 hours. In that sense, fasting should be considered a part of everyday life.

It is perhaps the oldest, and most powerful dietary intervention imaginable.

Fasting is not something queer and curious, but a part of every day, normal life.

It is perhaps the oldest, and most powerful dietary intervention imaginable.

Yet somehow we have forgotten its awesome power and ignored its potential to heal. Learning how to properly fast gives us the option of using it or not.

How Does Intermittent Fasting Work?

At its very core, fasting simply allows the body to burn off the excess body fat. It is important to realize that this is normal and humans have evolved to fast without negative health consequences. Body fat is merely food energy that has been stored away. If you don't eat, your body will simply 'eat' its own fat for energy.

Life is about balance. The good and the bad. The yin and the yang. The same applies to eating and fasting. Fasting, after all, is simply the flip side of eating. If you are not eating, you are fasting. Here's how it works.

When we eat, more food energy is ingested than we can immediately use. Some of this energy must be stored away for later use.

Stated very much simplified, Insulin is the key hormone involved in storage of food energy.



Insulin rises when we eat, helping store the excess energy in two separate ways. Sugars can be linked into long chains called glycogen and then stored in the liver. There is, however, limited storage space and once reached, the liver starts to turn the excess glucose into fat.

Some of this newly created fat is stored in the liver, but most is exported to other fat deposits in the body. While this is a more complicated process, there is no limit to the amount of fat created. So, two complementary food energy storage systems exist in our bodies.

One is easily accessible but with limited storage space (glycogen), and the other is more difficult to access but has unlimited storage space (body fat).



The process goes in reverse when we do not eat (fasting). Insulin levels fall, signaling the body to start burning stored energy since no more is coming through food. Blood glucose falls, so the body must now pull glucose out of storage to burn for energy. Glycogen is the most easily accessible energy source. It is broken down into glucose molecules to provide energy for the other cells. This can provide enough energy to power the body for 24-36 hours. After that, the body will start breaking down fat for energy.

So, that the body only really exists in two states – the fed (insulin high) state and the fasted (insulin low) state. Either we are storing food energy, or we are burning it. It's one or the other. If eating and fasting are balanced, then there is no net weight gain. If we start eating the minute we roll out of bed, and do not stop until we go to sleep, we spend almost all our time in the fed state. Over time, we will gain weight. We have not allowed our body any time to burn food energy.

To restore balance or to lose weight, simply increase the amount of time we burn food energy (fasting). In essence, fasting allows the body to use its stored energy. After all, that's what it is there for. The important thing to understand is that there is *nothing wrong with that*. That is how our bodies are designed. That's what dogs, cat, lions, bears do. That's what humans do.

If you are constantly eating, as is often recommended, then your body will simply use the incoming food energy and never burn the body fat. You'll only store it. Your body will save it for a time when there is nothing to eat. You lack balance. You lack fasting.

Fasting's most obvious benefit is weight loss. However, there are a myriad of benefits beyond this, many of which were widely known since ancient times.

These fasting periods were often called 'cleanses', 'detoxifications', or 'purifications', but the idea is the same – to abstain from eating food for a certain period of time for health benefits.

People imagined that this period of abstinence from food would clear out our bodies systems of toxins and rejuvenate us. They were more correct than they knew.

Some of these purported physical benefits of fasting include:

- Improved mental clarity and concentration
- Weight and body fat loss
- Lowered blood insulin and sugar levels
- Reverses type 2 diabetes
- Increased energy
- Improved fat burning
- Increased growth hormone
- Lowered blood cholesterol
- Prevent Alzheimer's disease (possibly)
- Extends life (possibly)
- Activates cellular cleansing (possibly) by stimulating autophagy (a discovery that was awarded the 2016 Nobel Prize in medicine)
- Decreased inflammation

Advantages

Fasting offers many important unique advantages not available in other diets. Where diets complicate life, fasting simplifies. Where diets are expensive, fasting is free. Where diets can take time, fasting saves time. Where diets are limited, fasting is available anywhere. Where diets have variable efficacy, fasting has unquestioned efficacy. There is no more powerful method to lower insulin and body weight.