

Jennifer Robinson

# INTERMITTENT Fasting

For Women  
Over 50



The Complete Beginner's  
Guide to Achieve Permanent  
Weight Loss, Reverse  
Aging and Burn Fat While  
Healing Your Body

# INTERMITTENT FASTING FOR WOMEN OVER 50

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THE COMPLETE BEGINNER GUIDE TO  
THE FASTING LIFESTYLE  
JENNIFER ROBINSON

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# CONTENTS

[Your Free Audiobook](#)

[Introduction](#)

1. [All About Intermittent Fasting](#)

[Fasting](#)

[What is Intermittent Fasting?](#)

[How Does Intermittent Fasting Work?](#)

[Intermittent Fasting Over 50](#)

2. [Benefits of Intermittent Fasting](#)

[Insulin Resistance and Type 2 Diabetes](#)

[Aging and Cellular Repair](#)

[Inflammation and Chronic Disease](#)

[Metabolism](#)

[Weight Loss](#)

[Intermittent Fasting Might Just Be Easier Than Dieting](#)

[Other Associated Benefits](#)

3. [Intermittent Fasting Don'ts](#)

[Who Shouldn't Fast?](#)

[Unhealthy Warning Signs](#)

[Intermittent Fasting Challenges and Mistakes](#)

4. [Intermittent Fasting is a Lifestyle](#)

[Intermittent Fasting and Calories](#)

[Intermittent Fasting and Binging](#)

5. [Intermittent Fasting and Diet](#)

[The Mediterranean Diet](#)

[Benefits of Exercise on Aging](#)

[Types of Exercise as You Age](#)

[Exercise Safely While Intermittent Fasting](#)

[Get the Timing Right](#)

[Bringing it all Together](#)

6. [Types of Intermittent Fasting](#)

[Voted Most Popular: 16:8 Intermittent Fasting](#)

[Voted Best for Women: 5:2 Intermittent Fasting](#)

[The Fast 800 Program](#)

[Choose Your Day Intermittent Fasting](#)

[The Warrior Diet](#)

[Eat Stop Eat Intermittent Fasting](#)

[Alternate Day Intermittent Fasting](#)

7. [Get Your Mindset Right](#)

[Psychological Barriers to Intermittent Fasting](#)

[Overcome Emotional Eating](#)

[Intermittent Fasting is not a Diet](#)

[Patience is a Virtue and You Need it](#)

8. [Starting Intermittent Fasting](#)

[How to Start Intermittent Fasting](#)

[The Early Stages: What to Expect](#)

[How to Break Your Fast](#)

9. [IF Tips and Tricks](#)

10. [IF Myths and FAQs](#)

[Intermittent Fasting Myths Busted](#)

[Intermittent Fasting: Frequently Asked Questions](#)

11. [Fasting Plans](#)

[10 Non-Fasting Days \(Mediterranean Diet\)](#)

[10 Fasting Day Plans \(500 Calories\)](#)

[Suggestions to Add 300 Calories on Fast Days](#)

[Afterword](#)

[What Else?](#)

[A message from the author](#)

[References](#)

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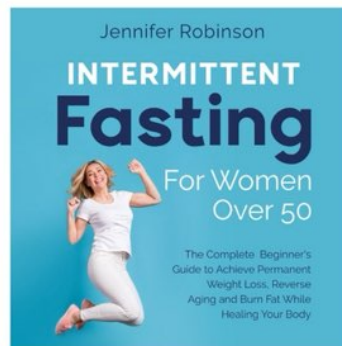
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## INTRODUCTION

*“Every human being is the author of his own health or disease.”*

- Buddha

Being healthy is a choice. Maintaining a healthy weight is a choice. Being happy is a choice. Your choices can significantly impact your life for the better or worse. What choice do you want to make for yourself?

Take a moment to think about how you feel in your own body. Now, think about how you want to feel, and envision it. The power to reach that goal is in your hands, and one lifestyle choice can help you get there.

Intermittent fasting has gained popularity and its following continues to grow every year. If it didn't deliver what it promised, why would so many people be doing it? If intermittent fasting didn't work, why would there be so many success stories? People don't do something unless they reap some sort of benefit from it. In the case of fasting, those benefits include health and weight loss.

Forget about unrealistically restrictive portions, ridiculously low calories that need to be counted meticulously, juicing, and every other aspect of a traditional 'diet'. Everybody knows that crash dieting is unhealthy and that fad diets come and go.



Everybody also knows the results don't stick around for the long haul. Soon after you end your torturous diet, the weight comes straight back and you're unhappy and have to start all over again. Typical 'diets' are traps that lock you into a yo-yo effect that can be hard to break once you start and take their toll on your health. Not intermittent fasting.

Intermittent fasting doesn't have any of the hallmarks of a diet because it isn't a diet; it's a lifestyle. It's a healthy change that works and it's easier than you may think. We're going to tell you:

- What intermittent fasting is.
- How it works.
- What the benefits are.
- The different types of fasting.
- How to do it.
- What you can expect.
- Tips and tricks to help you along the way.
- And so much more.

You picked this book up because you have an interest in improving your health, losing weight, and feeling great. Everything you need to know about using intermittent fasting to achieve that is right here, in this book. All you need to do is to keep reading to learn how to unlock the secrets of fasting for real results that last.

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## ALL ABOUT INTERMITTENT FASTING

**I**ntermittent fasting isn't a fad. It's not a flash-in-the-pan diet promoted by celebrities until the next "big thing" comes along. Intermittent fasting is real, and it works. The practice may only have gained popularity in recent decades, but the idea behind the benefits intermittent fasting offers has been around for longer than you may think.

### Fasting

Fasting refers to abstaining from food or drink, sometimes both. It's done for a variety of reasons, including religion, health, and rituals. Fasting may be done completely, with no food and/or drink consumption, or partially. The length of fasting can vary from short periods to longer durations. Fasting may even be intermittent or in intervals. Irrespective of how, why, and how long you fast, it is important to understand that during a fasting period your food and/or drink intake is going to be very limited or not at all.

### **Fasting as Medicine**

Fasting has been used as a therapeutic form of medicine for millennia. The earliest instances can be traced as far back as the 5th century BC. It was at this time that Hippocrates, an

ancient Greek physician, recommended that patients displaying symptoms of some diseases engage in fasting practices to help treat or reverse these diseases. There were still other physicians who recognized that patients displaying symptoms of some diseases were instinctively inclined to fast when feeling ill. They recognized that some illnesses led to a loss of appetite which, in turn, would lead to voluntary fasting, completely or partially. The thought was that fasting caused by a loss of appetite was a natural part of the body's healing process, and physicians stopped trying to make patients eat if they didn't want to.

Therapeutic forms of fasting have gone on to be used as a treatment for obesity, and the effects have been studied since at least the early 20th century. A renewed interest in fasting for weight loss began in the 1960s, and there has been an increasing amount of research done since then to determine the benefits of fasting in intervals for health and weight loss.

During the 20th century, our understanding of nutrition and what the human body needs began to evolve and continue to develop as more research and studies are conducted. The ways to fast and approaches to fasting have become more refined as our knowledge of the subject of health and weight loss has grown. Fasting has now emerged as a method for treating, and even preventing, some diseases, with more and more research studies yielding positive results.

## What is Intermittent Fasting?

Many people mistake intermittent fasting for a diet. It's not about what you eat; the focus is on when you eat. It comes down to an eating pattern, scheduling when to eat and when to

fast. Sometimes it may be easier to think of intermittent fasting as interval fasting.

While intermittent fasting isn't centered on what you eat, following a healthy diet does enhance the effects. It's not going to do you any good to fast at intervals if you are going to fill up on junk food in between. Likewise, controlling your calorie intake is also important. Fasting won't be effective if you overeat or indulge in eating binges in between fasting periods.

When practicing intermittent fasting, you cycle between periods of fasting and periods of eating normally. This can be done in various ways, such as fasting all day on certain days of the week or fasting for certain hours of the day. We will cover types of intermittent fasting in later chapters. For now, let's discuss how and why intermittent fasting and the benefits it has.

## How Does Intermittent Fasting Work?

Intermittent fasting works because it puts your body into a fasted state, which affects not only calories being burned, but also hormones within your body. To understand exactly how intermittent fasting works to help you lose weight, we need to examine the effects it has on your body.

### **Fasted State**

Intermittent fasting is in sharp contrast with typical eating patterns. Normally, human beings will eat regularly throughout the hours they are awake. A healthy waking-hour eating pattern involves three meals per day—breakfast, lunch, and dinner—along with two snacks in between meals. The problem lies with an increasingly sedentary lifestyle.

Many westerners sit in front of a computer in an office for most of the day. With TV and mobile technology, sitting on the couch after work has become a normal part of life. Often people don't include regular exercise in their lifestyle, and junk food is another big problem. It's laden with more calories than you may realize; most of which are completely empty and offer you no nutritional value. All of this sitting around doesn't burn much in the way of calories.

Therefore, whenever you eat, your body burns the calories from your food for fuel. The calories you consume are broken down into sugars, which are first absorbed into your bloodstream. From there, excess sugar in your bloodstream is stored in your liver and muscles. Once those stores are full, any excess sugar gets converted and stored as fat.

If you are taking in too many calories each day and not burning them off, your body burns as much as it needs and then stores the rest as fat. Burning only the calories that you consume means that your body doesn't dig into its fat stores for fuel. When you are only burning the calories you take in, your weight will remain stable. Your weight will increase if you are not able to burn off all of those calories.

Intermittent fasting can be done in several ways. You will be able to choose the method that suits you best. The overall concept is to choose regular intervals of fasting and eating. The whole point of the practice is to put your body into a fasted state. When you go into a fasted state, after several hours without eating, your body will have exhausted the sugar reserves in your bloodstream and muscles. When these sugar reserves are depleted, your body starts to burn fat for fuel.

The key to intermittent fasting's success is that it prolongs the period during which your body is depleted of sugar stores,

giving it more time to burn fat stores. It is very rare for your body to go into a fasted state between meals on a typical eating schedule, giving it no reason to burn fat.

How long does it take for your body to go into a state of fasting? Typically, it takes between 8 and 12 hours after eating your last meal for the body to have absorbed the food you ate and use the sugar from that meal. This period is known as being in a fed state. After that, your body goes into a fasted state.

### **Intermittent Fasting and Hormones**

We often assume that hormones only play a role in your mood but they also have a hand in weight loss. Here's a rundown of how intermittent fasting affects your hormones and how that, in turn, affects weight loss.

#### **Insulin**

- Step 1: You have a meal, your blood sugar rises; your pancreas is stimulated to release insulin.
- Step 2: Insulin removes sugar from your blood, sending it to your cells to use as energy.
- Step 3: Excess sugar is sent to your liver; insulin stimulates your liver to turn the sugar into glycogen to be stored in muscles.
- Step 4: Once muscle glycogen stores are full your liver turns sugar into fat.

**Important note:** Insulin resistance develops when overeating causes constant blood sugar spikes. Your body becomes desensitized to insulin and more has to be produced to remove the sugar. More insulin prompts your liver to turn sugar into fat faster.

## **Glucagon**

- Step 1: Prolonged periods without food causes your blood sugar level to drop and stimulates glucagon to be released.
- Step 2: Glucagon raises your blood sugar level by prompting the liver to retrieve glycogen from muscle stores and convert it back into sugar for release into your bloodstream and continue providing the body with fuel.
- Step 4: When glycogen stores are depleted; glucagon prompts your liver to break down fat for fuel.

## **Human Growth Hormone (HGH)**

- Step 1: The release of HGH is stimulated by low blood sugar, getting enough sleep, and exercising.
- Step 2: HGH stimulates the breakdown of fat for fuel.
- Step 3: HGH also has a role in building lean muscle.

**Important note:** High blood sugar causes increased insulin levels. High insulin levels cause your brain to suppress HGH, stopping it from aiding in breaking down fat. Suppressed HGH also won't aid in muscle growth.

## **Leptin**

Fat cells are responsible for the release of leptin into your blood. Leptin regulates hunger and appetite. The more fat you have, the more leptin there is in your blood, which should suppress your hunger and appetite. When your body fat drops, there is less leptin in your blood, and hunger increases. This is why you feel hungrier as you lose weight.

Remember that your body is designed to hold onto fat stores in case of a food shortage or famine. This is especially true of women. Women are the bearers of children and ensure the survival of the species. Your body doesn't want to let go of the fat because it perceives fat loss as a threat to your survival and doesn't want to make it easy for you to get rid of that fat.

**Important note:** Leptin resistance can develop when excessive fat stores cause too much leptin to hang around in your bloodstream. It desensitizes your body to the hunger-suppressing effects of leptin which leads to hunger when, in fact, you shouldn't be hungry, making you more likely to overeat.

### **Ghrelin (Hunger Hormone)**

Ghrelin is released into your blood shortly before your typical meal times, stimulating hunger. Yes, your body is super smart and it learns when your normal eating times are, and adjusts to that schedule.

Ghrelin is released in waves, and during fasting periods, the levels will drop, causing hunger pangs to go away. As you adjust to a new eating pattern, ghrelin release will correspond with your new mealtimes. It just takes time for your body to get used to this new schedule.

### **Intermittent Fasting Over 50**

Compared to regular dieting, intermittent fasting may have the upper hand. Firstly, you are not severely restricting your calorie intake; you are simply changing when you eat and making use of a smaller time frame to eat in. You are also less likely to lose a significant amount of lean body mass, which is important as we get older, especially for women.



Lean body mass decreases as we age, it's an inevitable part of life. Lean body mass has the potential to significantly decrease with age in both men and women. However, women are more susceptible to losing lean body mass than men and tend to lose it more quickly. This makes traditional dieting a risky business for women as they get older, especially if you 'over diet'.

When you cut your calorie intake too harshly over an extended period, your body will eventually start catabolizing itself. You will continue to lose body fat, but you will also lose important lean muscle mass, as your body starts to break down its muscle tissue for fuel. Not only is it easier to burn muscle than fat; the less muscle your body has, the less energy it needs to survive. You don't have to be on the verge of anorexia for this to happen either. It is a natural occurrence in any weight loss program, intermittent fasting included. The difference is that intermittent fasting may cause less lean body mass loss than regular dieting, helping preserve what you have.

If you are already going to lose lean mass as you get older, why would you want to make matters worse by opting for a traditional low-calorie diet, when you can lose fat and preserve more muscle with intermittent fasting? This may make intermittent fasting a more appealing option for women over the age of 50.

Now that you know intermittent fasting may be better for you than conventional dieting, what other reasons do you have to try intermittent fasting after 50?

Menopause, the big M, middle-age mayhem. Whatever you choose to call it, menopause is known to wreak havoc with women's lives as they get older. It is a period of life many women dread. On average, women go through menopause

around the age of 52 and there are a lot of changes that happen in your body during this time.

- Menopause can be seen as a transition period between child-bearing age and an age where you can no longer have children. Changes include:
- Your menstrual cycle changes and may eventually stop altogether.
- Your estrogen levels (the female hormone) decrease.
- Your ability to absorb vital nutrients and hormonal changes leave you vulnerable to developing diseases, such as osteoporosis and heart disease.
- Your metabolism slows down, causing your body to burn fewer calories and store more fat.
- Your body composition changes, as your lean muscle mass decreases and body fat increases.
- The distribution of your body fat may change from your thighs and hips to your tummy.

Intermittent fasting may be an answer to some of these problems that you face during menopause and postmenopause. Helping to stave off menopausal weight gain and body fat increase offers increased resistance against insulin resistance, cholesterol, high blood pressure, and sleep disturbances. It's all about overall health, and intermittent fasting may be the solution to help you achieve healthy body weight and improve overall health to increase your lifespan and quality of life.

## BENEFITS OF INTERMITTENT FASTING

**N**ow that you know how intermittent fasting works, it's time to take a look at what the benefits are and how intermittent fasting provides those benefits.

### Insulin Resistance and Type 2 Diabetes

Intermittent fasting can positively affect and lower, or even reverse, insulin resistance. When you lower or eliminate insulin resistance, you automatically also lower your risk of developing type 2 diabetes.

As previously explained, insulin resistance develops when you constantly provide your body with calorie-rich food which causes high blood sugar levels. Your pancreas keeps releasing insulin to try to get your blood sugar level under control. Eventually, your body's cells can't cope with all the insulin surging through your blood, and your pancreas can't keep up with making more and more insulin. This is when your blood sugar starts creeping up, and it will continue to creep up unless you do something about it. You will then develop pre-diabetes.

Pre-diabetes occurs when your blood sugar level rises to above normal, but not so high that you can be diagnosed with diabetes. Diabetes is diagnosed when you consistently have a

blood sugar level that is unhealthily high. Type 2 diabetes develops before type 1 diabetes. It may not be as severe as type 1 diabetes, but it is still a very serious condition and must be treated and controlled.

Intermittent fasting helps increase your body's sensitivity to insulin by decreasing your blood sugar level when your body goes into a fasted state. When your blood sugar is low, you don't need insulin, and your pancreas stops producing it. Over time, you become more sensitized toward insulin when it is released, because you aren't constantly bombarding your body with insulin in response to high blood sugar.

## Aging and Cellular Repair

Intermittent fasting may help slow down the aging process and combat inflammation from chronic disease. Both chronic disease-related inflammation and aging are increased by the oxidative stress that free radicals place on your body's cells. Free radicals can be seen as little bandits running around your body and damaging its cells. It is thought that intermittent fasting helps fight free radicals and reduce their numbers in your body by making your cells work harder.

When your blood sugar is low, there is less energy readily available to your cells. They are put under pressure to make use of energy sources that aren't as readily available, AKA fat. You are essentially putting your body's cells into survival mode, and this may result in them replacing damaged or unhealthy cells with new ones more quickly. Replacing unhealthy cells more quickly allows your body to convert less readily available sources and use that energy more efficiently. Constantly renewing your body's cells helps reduce free radicals over time.

## Inflammation and Chronic Disease

We've just established that intermittent fasting may help reduce the number of free radicals in your body and speed up cellular repair. This is great news for keeping your body feeling healthier and younger but what about illness and inflammation? Both free radicals and damaged or unhealthy cells contribute to certain diseases, especially degenerative diseases. When your body is actively removing and replacing unhealthy cells with healthy ones, degeneration happens much more slowly, as unhealthy cells can't build up as quickly. That's not to say that intermittent fasting can stop cell degeneration that happens with certain diseases and aging, but it may help slow the process down.

## Metabolism

Intermittent fasting may have fewer negative effects on weight loss and metabolism than traditional dieting. During regular dieting, calorie intake is restricted, but a regular eating schedule is maintained. Traditional dieting is associated with the loss of both fat and lean body mass. During any form of weight loss; an amount of lean body mass is going to be lost. However, intermittent fasting can help you retain more lean mass while losing fat.

As you lose weight and your body adapts to a lower calorie intake, your metabolism slows down to help your body make the most of the energy it's getting. When you preserve more lean mass, you have more cells that need fuel, and your metabolism won't slow down quite as much.

## Weight Loss

A lot of what we've just discussed has to do with how intermittent fasting helps you lose body fat. Now it's time to put it all together.

- You are likely to consume fewer calories when you have a smaller window of opportunity in which to eat. When a calorie deficit is created, your body will begin breaking down and burning fat for energy.
- Low blood sugar levels in a fasted state stimulates the production of glucagon which signals your body to convert fat stores into energy.
- Lower blood insulin levels stimulate the production of the human growth hormone, which also helps break down fat to burn as fuel.
- You are likely to lose less lean body mass while engaging in intermittent fasting, which prevents your metabolism from slowing down as much as it would with traditional dieting.
- Intermittent fasting may lower insulin resistance so that your body doesn't just automatically store most of what you eat as fat because of too much insulin in your blood.

## Intermittent Fasting Might Just Be Easier Than Dieting

Adapting to an intermittent fasting schedule may be easier than adapting to a specific diet. Thinking about a diet that is low-carb, low-fat, low-sodium, or low-sugar, etc. may sound easy and appear easy at first glance. Upon execution, you may find yourself craving all the foods you cut out of your diet.

Cravings are a diet's enemy; they tempt you to 'cheat' on your diet, or give up on it completely.

Intermittent fasting may sound really difficult. After all, you have to go hours and hours without eating, whether you choose to do it daily for certain hours or periodically for whole days. The thought of being hungry can be scarier than the thought of craving a type of food. However, intermittent fasting may not be as hard as it sounds. Your body adapts to your eating schedule. At first, intermittent fasting may be a challenge. But after a while, your body adapts and releases hunger hormones according to your new schedule.

Dr. Michael Eades embarked on intermittent fasting, and here's what he had to say about it.

*“Diets are easy in the contemplation, difficult in the execution. Intermittent fasting is just the opposite — it's difficult in the contemplation but easy in the execution.”*

*Most of us have contemplated going on a diet. When we find a diet that appeals to us, it seems as if it will be a breeze to do. But when we get into the nitty-gritty of it, it becomes tough. For example, I stay on a low-carb diet almost all the time. But if I think about going on a low-fat diet, it looks easy. I think about bagels, whole wheat bread, and jelly, mashed potatoes, corn, bananas by the dozen, etc. — all of which sound appealing. But were I to embark on such a low-fat diet I would soon tire of it and wish I could have meat and eggs. So a diet is easy in contemplation, but not so easy in the long-term execution.*

*Intermittent fasting is hard in the contemplation, of that there is no doubt. “You go without food for 24 hours?” people would ask, incredulously when we explained what we were doing. “I could never do that.” But once started, it's a snap.*

*No worries about what and where to eat for one or two out of the three meals per day. It's a great liberation. Your food expenditures plummet. And you're not particularly hungry. ... Although it's tough to overcome the idea of going without food, once you begin the regimen, nothing could be easier."*

— Dr. Michael Eades

## Other Associated Benefits

Intermittent fasting has been associated with several other health benefits, including:

- Prevention of cancer due to fewer free radicals.
- Prevention of Alzheimer's disease due to increased cellular repair.
- Lower blood pressure.
- Prevention of heart disease.
- Lower cholesterol.
- Improved sleep.



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## INTERMITTENT FASTING DON'TS

**I**ntermittent fasting is healthy and simple, but it can quickly turn the other way if you are not careful. There are people who can, and others who can't, engage in intermittent fasting. There are warning signs to look out for which indicate that your intermittent fasting may have become unhealthy. There are also mistakes to avoid and overcome. We're going to give you a rundown of the intermittent fasting don'ts that you should avoid.

Important note: Before undertaking any form of dietary or lifestyle change, consult a qualified medical professional. Only a professional physician will be able to provide guidance and direction regarding your health. Making drastic changes without consulting your doctor could be dangerous, and even life-threatening.

### Who Shouldn't Fast?

Intermittent may sound like an ideal solution to weight loss. It is also associated with a host of health benefits, and may even extend your life. However, there are times, types of people, and medical conditions that make intermittent fasting unsuitable. Whenever you decide to try a new diet or eating schedule, such as intermittent fasting, you should always

consult a medical professional to avoid any complications or harmful side effects.

### **Low Blood Pressure**

Intermittent fasting may help lowering blood pressure. If you already have low blood pressure, fasting may not be a safe practice, as it could lower your blood pressure even further.

### **Diabetes**

Diabetes is characterized by having an unhealthily high blood sugar level. Intermittent fasting may help prevent diabetes by lowering your blood sugar levels and sensitizing your body to insulin. However, if you have unstable blood sugar levels, experience difficulty regulating blood sugar, or if you are a diabetic, you should not try fasting. This is especially true if you are taking medication to help regulate your blood sugar.

Intermittent fasting may cause your blood sugar level to drop to a dangerously low level, also known as hypoglycemia. The chances of this happening are increased if you are taking medication that already lowers your blood sugar level, as lowering it further could be risky. Very low blood sugar levels may make you feel dizzy, shaky, you may pass out, or you may even go into a coma.

The other risk associated with being diabetic and intermittent fasting is that your blood sugar levels could spike dangerously high when you do break your fasting period and start eating again. This is a particular risk if you eat foods rich in carbohydrates, and if going without food for prolonged periods encourages you to overeat.

### **Medication**

Certain medications may affect your hormones and how your body typically functions. Intermittent fasting changes the way

your body functions and could negatively interact with medication. There will be safe and unsafe medications, it is important to consult your prescribing doctor about possible implications of intermittent fasting while taking medication.

### **Fertility and Menstrual Cycle**

Fertility may be negatively impacted by intermittent fasting because it has the power to affect your hormones. Some hormones may be suppressed and result in irregular ovulation or no ovulation at all. If you are trying to conceive or need optimum fertility for an ovum, or egg, donation, intermittent fasting is not recommended because of this potential disruption of fertility.

As a woman, the effect that fasting can have on your hormones may mean that being in fasted states regularly can interfere with your menstrual cycle. When your body is fasting, it may perceive the circumstances as less than ideal for childbearing. This could lead to disruptions in your menstrual cycle, also known as amenorrhea. Women with a history of amenorrhea should consult a doctor before trying fasting. If you are practicing intermittent fasting and notice a change in your menstrual cycle, or if it stops altogether, you should stop fasting and consult a medical practitioner.

### **Underweight or Struggling to Gain Weight**

Intermittent fasting is associated with weight loss by putting your body into a fasted state where it resorts to burning fat for energy. However, if you are already underweight or if you are struggling to gain weight, shedding pounds isn't ideal.

If you are underweight, you probably have very little body fat to begin with. Losing more weight could cause your body to go into distress. You could experience amenorrhea and fertility difficulties. For example, amenorrhea is often experienced by

top athletes and people suffering from anorexia. While their health may be worlds apart, they have one thing in common; extremely little body fat.

If you are not a top athlete, whose body fat percentage is very low despite being extremely healthy, there is another potential risk. If you are an average Jane on the street, who happens to be underweight, you may experience catabolism if your fat reserves begin to run out. This is when your body starts absorbing its lean muscle for energy. Your body also isn't selective about what muscle it breaks down, putting your heart at risk of permanent damage, as it is also a muscle.

### **Eating Disorders**

Women with a history of eating disorders should not practice intermittent fasting. Even though you may feel recovered and have had a healthy eating pattern for several years, you are at risk. Fasting can be triggering for eating disorders.

Past bulimics may slip back into old habits of fasting and then binge-eating, instead of fasting and consuming a healthy amount of food during their eating period.

Past anorexics may be tempted to take their fasting too far and relapse into not eating almost at all.

Intermittent fasting isn't just physical. It is also psychological and may easily cause an eating disorder relapse in people with an unhealthy, or previously unhealthy, mental relationship with food.

### **Unhealthy Warning Signs**

Intermittent fasting is a useful tool to help you achieve your weight loss goals and improve your overall health. It can even

help you live longer. However, there are some warning signs that intermittent fasting has become unhealthy or even unsafe for you. If you experience any of the following symptoms, it may be time to stop intermittent fasting and reassess your situation. The solution may be as simple as switching to a different fasting schedule or changing your diet.

### **Preoccupation with Eating**

When you are following any type of eating plan, you should not be completely consumed by, and preoccupied with, food. A preoccupation with what you eat is unhealthy. Dieting, in general, could give rise to a condition known as orthorexia. Unlike other well-known eating disorders such as anorexia, orthorexia involves an obsession with what you eat instead of how much you eat. Any obsession with food is unhealthy, even if it's an obsession with healthy food or healthy eating patterns.

Warning signs to look out for:

- Constantly thinking about and planning what your next meal will be and when you are going to eat it.
- Constantly talking about your diet or the foods you eat. You may even go as far as to start criticizing what others are eating.
- Being inflexible over what you are 'allowed' to eat and when to eat it. You may find yourself avoiding social situations because you can't eat what you want to eat, or because it doesn't fit in with your fasting schedule.

### **Sleep**

Different people react differently to the same things. It's part of our individuality. It's been suggested that intermittent fasting may improve your sleep. How? When you schedule your window of opportunity to end a sensible length of time before you go to bed, you minimize snacking late at night, which could help you get better quality sleep.

However, the opposite could also be true. Fasting could also end up disrupting your sleep, specifically the sleep stage that is known as rapid eye movement sleep, or REM. It's thought that REM sleep is beneficial for your mood and how well you remember or learn new things. If you discover that your sleep is being affected, it could lead to more serious problems linked to poor sleep.

### **Alertness and Awareness**

During a fasting period your body will be digging into its energy reserves, AKA fat, to keep going, due to a lack of food energy to burn. You may experience a lack of energy when you start intermittent fasting. After all, you are making a big change to your lifestyle and it takes time for your body to adapt. However, if your energy levels don't improve, you could find yourself becoming less alert and aware of your surroundings. If your quality of sleep is also being affected by fasting, the problem could be compounded.

A potential reason for ongoing lethargy is that you are not getting enough food during your eating window and/or that you are not getting the right nutrition. If you find that you're not as alert or aware as you should be, try re-examining your intermittent fasting to decrease your fasting period to give yourself adequate time to re-fuel. Alternatively, if you are eating enough calories, it may be worth taking a closer look at your nutrition. Without getting all the proper nutrients every

day, you will experience a lack of energy, and possibly other health problems.

Warning signs to look out for:

- Dizziness.
- Lack of concentration.
- Chronic fatigue.
- Decreased awareness.
- Being less alert.

### **Self-Shaming and Guilt**

Negative self-talk is never a good thing. It is especially bad for you if you are beating yourself up over your diet. Disordered eating behavior could arise from feeling shame and anxiety over your diet or your fasting schedule. Shaming yourself for breaking your fast earlier than intended, or for eating after your scheduled fasting period has begun, is a warning sign. Just as you need to practice flexibility with what you eat, you should be reasonably flexible about your eating schedule.

Intermittent fasting is supposed to help you feel better about yourself by helping you overcome health concerns, lose weight, and feel healthy. You shouldn't feel bad about yourself for giving yourself a little bit of wiggle room in your schedule.

### **Stress**

Intermittent fasting puts your body under stress. Think about it, it's stressful to go without food for prolonged periods. When your body is stressed, it releases cortisol, also known as the stress hormone. Cortisol has a purpose for short-term stress. It helps you handle that stress better by increasing your blood sugar level, improving your brain's use of that sugar, and it also stimulates increased cellular repair.

However, if your body is chronically stressed, it is constantly in a fight-or-flight state. This is when cortisol can turn into your enemy and put you at risk of developing health problems. In fact, constant stress could make you gain weight instead of losing it, as this hormone stimulates the storage of fat around your abdomen.

The solution to this warning sign may be to adjust your fasting period so that it is shorter. Good nutrition plays a role in how you handle stress. Another option may be to adjust your diet to make sure that you are getting the proper nutrition your body needs every day.

## Intermittent Fasting Challenges and Mistakes

Intermittent fasting is a challenge, specifically in the beginning stages while you are physically and mentally adapting to this new lifestyle. It's not impossible but it's not going to be a breeze. Nothing worth achieving in life comes without putting in some effort. There are a few challenges that you will face when you start intermittent fasting and learning to overcome those challenges at the beginning will set you up for long-term success.

### **Hunger**

It should come as no surprise that you are going to experience hunger during fasting periods. If you are a habitual grazer, meaning that you are used to eating frequently throughout the day, you are definitely going to experience hunger while your body adapts to a new eating schedule.

Your stomach is likely to grumble as if arguing with you about your decision to undertake intermittent fasting. For a while after you start, your body will still release ghrelin at your



previous eating times. It will slowly adapt, and resisting the urge to break your fast will become less. However, there are a few things you can do during your fasting periods to help make it easier on yourself in those early days.

- Avoid looking at food. Don't flip through cookbooks, don't read about healthy diet foods, and don't visit recipe or cooking websites. Steer clear of cooking shows or shows that revolve around food.
- Avoid smelling food. If you are in the middle of a fasting period, avoid the fresh food and hot food counters in stores, restaurants, and cafes where food is served, schedule social visits when friends and family aren't cooking meals.
- Try not to think about food. If your mind wanders toward food, steer it in a different direction by focusing on something else, or distract yourself. Avoid becoming preoccupied with what you are going to eat when you break your fast.

Smelling, seeing, and thinking about food can cause your stomach to release gastric acid in preparation for eating and make you even hungrier.

### **Dehydration**

It can be easy to become dehydrated during your fasting periods. Sometimes we forget to drink enough because we're not eating. It is important to be proactive in ensuring that you drink enough water to prevent dehydration. Being dehydrated can also increase your feelings of hunger. Even without engaging in an intermittent fast, sometimes being thirsty imitates the feeling of hunger. During your fasting period, this copycat feeling of hunger because of thirst can intensify how

hungry you feel. Stay hydrated to minimize additional ‘hunger’ pangs.

### **Eating Badly**

Intermittent fasting comes with cravings and hunger. That’s a given. However, if you are not nourishing your body properly when you do eat, those fasting period cravings will become even worse. Your body will be craving essential nutrients, and that will make it more frustrating and difficult to handle your fasting periods. Do yourself a big favor and nourish your body with good foods to make sure you get all the nutrition you need so that you minimize those pesky cravings.

### **Restricting Calories**

While making sure that you don’t over-eat during your eating window, it’s equally important to make sure that you don’t under-eat by restricting your calories too much. When you are hard up to shed some pounds, it can be very tempting to eat as little as possible when not actively fasting so that you can ‘maximize’ the weight loss benefits of intermittent fasting. However, this isn’t a good idea for several reasons.

- Your metabolism may slow down, slowing your weight loss.
- You may become malnourished by not taking in adequate amounts of nutrition.
- You will amplify your fasting period hunger and cravings.

These are just a few reasons not to restrict your calories too much while you are engaging in intermittent fasting. There may be more, long-term, problems that you could end up with if you under-eat too much. Instead, eat healthfully, enjoy

sensible portions, and only be mindful of your calories, but don't count and restrict them obsessively.

### **Doing Too Much at Once**

Trying to make too many big life changes at once is a recipe for disaster. Many people have the idea that they want to “turn over a new leaf” and make all sorts of health changes at once. This is especially true of New Year's resolutions. If you want to make changes stick, the key to success is slow and steady, by starting out small and working your way up to bigger and better things.

If you are not used to being active, or fasting for prolonged periods, and then restrict your calorie intake while changing your diet, you are setting yourself up for failure. Fasting alone places your body under stress. Each of these other things also places your body under stress. All of this stress combined is not good for your body or your success. You are likely to experience fatigue and other problems.

Instead of going flat out with a lot of big changes, make small ones. For example, start fasting and eating healthier, but not restricting your calories, and add some light exercise to your week. As you get fitter, stronger, and healthier, you can increase your activity level without tiring your body out with all the changes.

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## INTERMITTENT FASTING IS A LIFESTYLE

**W**e've said it once, and we'll say it again. Intermittent fasting isn't a diet. It doesn't focus on what you eat, but rather when you eat it. That being said, intermittent fasting isn't going to do you much good if you maintain an unhealthy diet and lifestyle. To get the most out of an intermittent fasting schedule, it should be coupled with a healthy, balanced diet and regular exercise.

### Intermittent Fasting and Calories

The good news is that intermittent fasting has been associated with various health benefits from weight loss to preventing diabetes. The reality check is that intermittent fasting, alone, cannot be held responsible for your health. Health is a recipe; it requires several ingredients, and one of those ingredients is a healthy diet. You cannot expect your body to burn off your fat stores if you are replacing those fat stores during your eating window.

Intermittent fasting isn't like a magic pill that will miraculously vaporize your unwanted pounds during your fasting hours and also counteract the calories you consume when you do eat. Intermittent fasting is only as good as what

you eat when you're not fasting. That includes both your calorie intake and your nutrition.

For example, if your body needs 1,500 calories per day to maintain your weight, and fasting burns off 200 calories per day by converting fat to fuel, you would need to eat 1,700 calories to maintain your weight. Eating 1,500 calories a day will put you in a 200-calorie deficit, which will stimulate weight loss. However, if you eat 2,000 calories during your eating window, you will be taking in 300 calories more than you would need for maintained weight. This will lead to weight gain instead of weight loss.

It's suggested that the smaller window of opportunity facilitated by intermittent fasting leads to naturally consuming fewer calories each day. However, that doesn't mean it's a given. You could find yourself compensating for the fasting period by overeating or by indulging in high-calorie foods. It is important to watch what you eat and how much you eat when you engage in intermittent fasting, otherwise you won't achieve the results you want.

On the flip side, it's not a good idea to under-eat during your eating window. It can be tempting to cut your calories, under the impression that it will help you lose weight faster. Don't give in to that temptation.

Intermittent fasting is meant to help your body burn fat for fuel during your fasting periods. You should be mindful of your daily caloric needs, but not restrict your calories. You can work out your daily caloric needs by calculating your basal metabolic rate (BMR) and using that to determine how many calories you should be eating in a day. You should see results without having to restrict your calories below what your body needs you to feed it every day.

## **Basal Metabolic Rate and Caloric Needs**

Your basal metabolic rate is the number of calories your body burns at rest. If you were to spend the entire day doing nothing but getting bed rest, the amount of calories you need to keep functioning in that resting state is your BMR. Once you have worked out your BMR, you multiply that number according to your activity level.

Important note: Basic methods of calculating daily caloric needs only provide you with an estimation of your caloric requirements. Each individual is different, and their metabolism differs. However, the estimation is a good starting point of reference. You can always make adjustments as you learn about your body and what it needs.

### **Simple Formula to Calculate Your Basal Metabolic Rate**

The formula for calculating BMR for women and men differs. Here is the women's formula.

- Metric:  $655 + (9.563 \times \text{weight in kg}) + (1.850 \times \text{height in cm}) - (4.676 \times \text{age in years})$ .
- Imperial:  $655 + (4.35 \times \text{weight in lbs.}) + (4.7 \times \text{height in in.}) - (4.7 \times \text{age in years})$ .

For example, using the imperial calculation for a woman of 175 pounds, 65 inches tall (5ft 5in), and 50 years old:

- $655 + (4.35 \times 175) + (4.7 \times 65) - (4.7 \times 50)$ .
- $655 + 761.25 + 305.5 - 235 = \text{BMR of } 1,486.75$  calories required daily.

That's just the number of calories you need per day to stay alive at rest. To calculate your total daily caloric needs, you

need to multiply your BMR by an additional number according to your activity level.

- Sedentary or inactive lifestyle with very little or no exercise at all:  $\text{BMR} \times 1.2 = \text{total daily caloric intake}$ .
- Slightly active, including lightly exercise a few times per week:  $\text{BMR} \times 1.375 = \text{total daily caloric intake}$ .
- Fairly active, including moderate exercise 3 to 5 days per week:  $\text{BMR} \times 1.55 = \text{total daily caloric intake}$ .
- Very active, including moderate to intense exercise 6 to 7 days per week:  $\text{BMR} \times 1.725 = \text{total daily caloric intake}$ .
- Extremely active, including moderate to intense exercise 6 to 7 days per week while also having a job that is physically demanding:  $\text{BMR} \times 1.9 = \text{total daily caloric intake}$ .

For example, a 50-year-old, 175-pound woman who is 65 inches tall and whose lifestyle falls into the fairly active category:

$\text{BMR } 1,486.75 \times 1.55 = 2,304.5$  calories needed per day for weight maintenance.

Using these basic calculations, you can work out how much you should be feeding your body during your eating window to stay healthy and prevent under-eating.

## Intermittent Fasting and Binging

When you engage in intermittent fasting, there is a real risk of binging during your eating window. It is important to be mindful of this risk.

Think about fasting like holding your breath. When you breathe again, you may find yourself drawing in a big gulp of air. The same principle applies to breaking your fast. It is easy to find yourself feeling so hungry you could “eat a horse”, so to speak. Going on a binging spree and overeating during your window of opportunity is likely to form an unhealthy pattern of binging and fasting which could spiral into an eating disorder. Nobody wants this, especially you. You are pursuing health and longevity, not unhealthy eating habits.

Luckily, there are ways to prevent overeating and binging when you break your fast.

### **Hydrate, Hydrate, and Hydrate Some More**

Staying properly hydrated will not only help minimize feelings of thirst that disguise themselves as hunger pangs during your fasting period, but also drinking enough water could help prevent overeating when you break your fast. If you are not drinking enough water during your fasting period, chances are you’re not drinking enough during your eating window either. Staying adequately hydrated will stop you from mistaking those same feelings of thirst for hunger when you do have the opportunity to eat. You can also drink a glass of water shortly before a meal to help you feel more naturally full after a reasonable meal.

### **Eat Slowly**

Being hungry is the easiest way to end up overeating. Coming off a fast, you are going to be hungry, so how do you stop yourself from eating too much before you have time to realize you’re full? You eat slowly. It takes time for your stomach and brain to register that you have eaten enough to be full. If you are eating too quickly, you could easily eat too much during the time it takes your stomach to fill up and your brain to



register that you are full. Mindful eating—focusing on what you are eating, the texture, the taste, the smell, and taking enjoyment with each bite—makes you slow down. Chew your food carefully instead of wolfing it down in chunks. When you slow things down, you give your brain and stomach enough time to register that you have eaten enough and are full.

### **Wait Before Having Seconds**

If you have eaten a reasonable portion of healthy food but still feel hungry, be patient. Wait at least 15 minutes after finishing your meal to give your stomach and brain time to communicate properly. You may find that when those 15 minutes are up, you may not be as hungry anymore, or you may not be hungry at all.

### **Make Your Last Meal Your Best**

Your last meal before going back into a fasting period is very important. This is the meal that sets the stage for how you feel while you are fasting. If you simply nibble on a salad, you are going to feel very hungry again very soon after starting your fast. Your last meal should be satisfying and contain several key ingredients.

- Include fiber to bulk out your food and slow digestion, helping you feel fuller for longer and keeping your blood sugar levels stable throughout the digestion period.
- Include protein that digests slowly and provides your body with important amino acids.
- Include complex carbohydrates that take time to digest, you will feel fuller for longer and your blood sugar levels will stay more stable during the digestion period.

## **Start Slow**

If you are new to intermittent fasting, jumping into fasts that last an entire 24-hour period probably isn't a good idea. Start with smaller fasting periods, such as 14 hours, and gradually increase the length of your fast as your body adapts to your new fasting-eating schedule. By starting slow, you won't be quite as hungry when you break your fast and will be less inclined to overeat.

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## INTERMITTENT FASTING AND DIET

**A**s the saying goes “You are what you eat.” Most people take that saying far too literally and attribute unhealthy foods to an unhealthy body. While this is often true, it’s not the whole truth. If you look at diet and nutritional needs as the bigger picture, it’s not just about foods that we label as healthy or unhealthy. You can also be unhealthy even though you’re eating healthy foods. Health from your diet comes down to nutrition.

For example, veganism is considered a very healthy diet. It’s a plant-based diet, free from animal products. Living on healthy plant foods is great, but you still need to strike a balance between protein, healthy fats, and carbohydrates. You still need to ensure that you are getting all the minerals, vitamins, and nutrients your body needs to function properly by eating a varied and balanced diet. If you only live on garden salads and don’t include a variety of food for essential nutrients as well as plant-based proteins, carbohydrates, and fats, you’re going to become malnourished and unhealthy.

Nutrition is king whether you are dieting or not. It is even more important when you are trying to lose weight and get healthy, and it is vital when you engage in intermittent fasting. So, what does a healthy diet look like, and how do you go about it?

There are so many different types of diets available today, each one claiming to be the key to weight loss or health, or both. To further complicate matters is the word ‘diet’ itself. Any time you use the word diet, it inevitably throws a curveball into the works because of the typical connotations of the word. In our modern health and body-conscious society, a diet has become synonymous with a restrictive way of eating, often aimed at slimming down. However, the actual meaning is a way of eating. A diet can be healthy or unhealthy, it is simply a broad term used to refer to how, when, or what you eat. If you type ‘healthy diet’ into Google, you’re likely to come up with an endless number of pages telling you about a dizzying array of diets that can easily become overwhelming.

Which one is the best? Which one is backed up by more than just say-so? Which source, between celebrity diet secrets to fitness blogs, can you trust? We’re going to take the confusion and guesswork out of it for you.

The world’s overall healthiest diet, for the fourth year running, as of 2021, is the Mediterranean diet. This is according to the annual ranking by U.S News and World Report. How do they conclude that this is the best diet in the world?

A panel, consisting of 24 experts, scrutinizes and analyzes diets from across the globe to provide different diets with different rankings. According to these renowned experts, the Mediterranean diet scores as follows:

- Overall rating: 4.2/5
- Health rating: 4.8/5
- Ease of following: 3.8/5
- Short-term weight loss: 3.0/5
- Long-term weight loss: 3.1/5

The Mediterranean diet also scored the number one spot in:

- Plant-based diets (diets that include animal products such as meat and dairy, but are made up mostly of plant-based foods)
- Heart-healthy diets.
- Diabetes-healthy diets.
- Healthy eating diets.

Now that you, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that the Mediterranean diet is the healthiest in the world, let's take a closer look at what it's about and why you should adopt it for intermittent fasting and beyond.

## The Mediterranean Diet

The Mediterranean diet was developed by American biologist Ancel Keys and it's based on the eating patterns of the indigenous people from countries bordering the Mediterranean Sea during the 1960s. Over the years there has been a lot of time and effort put into research and studies to determine the health benefits and success of this diet, proving it to be exactly as healthy as it claims to be.

The Mediterranean diet is based on leading a healthy, active lifestyle. The first and foremost tier of this diet is getting regular exercise and enjoying meals with friends and family. From there, food is divided into groups according to how much and how often you should eat them.

The basis of every meal should be made up of:

- Whole grains.

- Beans, legumes, nuts, and seeds (approximately one to three servings daily).
- Vegetables and fruits (Vegetables should be enjoyed in abundance while fruits should be limited to two or three servings per day.)
- Herbs and spices.
- Healthy fats and vegetable oils, such as olive oil.
- Fish and seafood are traditionally included twice weekly, but may be enjoyed up to once per day.
- Poultry and eggs are traditionally included twice weekly, but may be enjoyed up to once per day.
- Dairy should be enjoyed in moderation, up to one to two servings per day.
- Red meats should be eaten occasionally, but may be included up to once per week.
- Sweets should be avoided and only enjoyed infrequently.
- If you enjoy your occasional glass of wine or a beer, perhaps you like to have a cocktail with the girls, don't worry. Alcohol is allowed in moderation.

### **Whole and Processed Food**

The Mediterranean diet is based on whole foods. These are foods that are enjoyed in their natural state or have undergone as little processing as possible. Refining and processing foods not only breaks down their complex carbohydrates into simpler carbs, but it also stuffs them full of potentially harmful additives and preservatives.

For example, white bread flour has been ground down and processed so that it has a higher glycemic index than whole-wheat bread flour. What this means is that white flour has been processed into simple carbs that have a greater effect on your

blood sugar, raising it more than the complex carbohydrates in whole-wheat flour. Similarly, whole-wheat bread will have a higher glycemic index than whole-grain bread, because it contains a larger proportion of processed ingredients.

When following the Mediterranean diet, wherever possible, always choose whole foods that have undergone as little processing as possible. This often means choosing fresh fruit and vegetables, brown rice, and whole-wheat or whole-grain products. It also means avoiding canned, packaged, and bottled food items as much as possible, specifically convenience, heat-and-eat type meals which include, but are not limited to:

- Frozen meals.
- Frozen pizza.
- Frozen crumbed seafood and meats.
- Pre-made dough for baking bread, cakes, and cookies.

Foods that you should avoid on the Med diet include:

- Highly processed or refined foods, as well as items labeled ‘diet’, ‘low-fat’, etc. If it looks like it was produced in a factory, it’s probably processed and packed with unnecessary additives.
- Refined grains, such as foods made with white flour, including pasta and bread
- Foods and beverages with added sugar, as well as adding sugar to foods, such as cereals.
- Refined oils, such as soybean oil, among others.
- Processed meats, such as deli meats and sausages.
- Trans fats, such as margarine.

Along with the above-listed foods, fast food is another no-no on the Mediterranean diet. You don't have to cut your favorite guilty treats out completely, just enjoy it in moderation and only once in a blue moon instead of daily or weekly.

### **Mediterranean Diet Health Benefits**

The Mediterranean diet, also sometimes called the Med diet, has been unanimously voted to be the healthiest diet by far, but why is that? What are the health benefits you can look forward to by switching from a typical westernized diet to a Mediterranean diet?

- The Mediterranean diet is packed full of natural nutrition, such as vitamins and minerals as well as fiber and antioxidants that help prevent and even reverse some health conditions.
- Nutrients, such as healthy fats and fiber, promote heart health and reduce the risk of heart disease.
- Your levels of good HDL may be increased, while levels of bad LDL cholesterol may be decreased, to improve overall cholesterol levels.
- Whole foods and complex carbohydrates with a low glycemic index promote stable blood sugar and prevent insulin resistance and diabetes.
- The Mediterranean diet may reduce the risk of stroke in women.
- This diet is suggested to promote cognitive function and prevent certain diseases, such as Alzheimer's.
- The nutrient-dense foods included in the Med diet may help prevent muscle and bone degeneration associated with post-menopausal hormone changes, keeping you agile as you get older.



- The nutrition offered by the Med diet may be beneficial for those with rheumatoid arthritis.
- The Mediterranean diet is suggested to promote healthy weight loss and maintenance of a healthy weight.
- It may reduce the risk of developing certain cancers, such as breast cancer.
- The healthy nutrition of the diet may help manage and lessen symptoms of depression.
- All of the health benefits offered by the Mediterranean diet combined may increase your longevity.

### **Mediterranean Diet Tips**

Use fresh, seasonal vegetables, and ensure that you eat both a variety and lots of them. The variety will keep things interesting, as well as provide you with many different vitamins and minerals. Using seasonal fresh produce will keep the cost down and avoid having to use packages of out-of-season foods. Try to fill half of your plate with vegetables at each meal.

Make the change from refined grains to whole grains that contain essential nutrients and complex carbohydrates. Swap white bread, pasta, and baked goods made with white flour for whole-wheat. Choose whole-grain cereals instead of cereals made from refined grains, and skip the ones with added sugar.

Make use of healthy fats when cooking. Extra-virgin olive oil that has been cold-pressed is always a winner. Other sources of healthy fats include seeds, nuts, avocados, and olives. You can even swap your butter on bread to use olive oil instead.

When choosing dairy products, steer clear of low-fat versions, or those that have been sweetened. Plain Greek yogurt is a great addition to breakfast cereals. Consume dairy in small quantities, but include it almost daily, if not every day, as a good source of calcium.

Include seafood in your diet roughly twice a week. There is so much to choose from, and opting for fatty fish provides you with much-needed omega-3 fatty acids to help keep your heart healthy. Shellfish can be used in a variety of dishes, such as jambalaya. Beware of potential shellfish allergies.

Add some healthy sweetness into your diet by swapping out traditional desserts for fruit. You can soak or cook dried fruit (just beware of adding sugar), serve it fresh, add some Greek yogurt on the side. The possibilities are endless, and a natural source of sugar instead of excess added sugar.

Try cooking one meatless meal every week. Use protein-packed vegetables, such as legumes and beans, instead of meat protein. The most popular day of the week to try is ‘meatless Mondays. Swapping a single meal per week for a vegetarian option will naturally curb your intake of meat such as red meat and poultry.

Change how you think about meat. The typical western diet revolves around meat and starch. Moving away from those large quantities of meat at the majority of meals may seem a little daunting. Start off by reducing the amount of meat per meal to make the transition easier. Start to investigate and substitute plant protein sources gradually to keep meeting your protein needs. Chapter 6: Intermittent Fasting and Exercise

Exercise is a vital part of a healthy body and a healthy lifestyle. It is especially important to stay active as you get

older. While losing weight is mostly down to diet, exercise does have a role to play.

## Benefits of Exercise on Aging

Along with diet, exercise plays an important role in controlling your weight and preventing obesity. To maintain your weight, the calories you eat and drink must equal the energy you burn. To lose weight, you must use more calories than you eat and drink.

Your heart is a muscle and doing regular cardiovascular exercise helps to give that love muscle a workout, keeping it strong. It also improves blood circulation, increases the amount of oxygen in your blood, and may lower blood pressure. In short, cardio helps prevent heart disease.

Exercise is good for improving mood and mental health by releasing feel-good chemicals into your body. These chemicals, such as endorphins, help reduce your stress levels and decrease your risk of developing mental health issues, such as depression.

When you exercise, your body releases chemicals and proteins that improve brain function. This helps to keep your thinking and judgment sharp as a tack as you get older.

It's no secret that as your body gets older, your muscles and bones become weaker. This is especially true of post-menopausal women when the drop in certain hormones decreases your calcium absorption. However, regular exercise strengthens your muscles and improves bone density, giving you greater mobility and protection against injury, if you happen to fall.

Exercise may help to decrease your risk of developing certain cancers, such as lung and breast cancer.

As you get older, you may find that your balance isn't what it used to be. Falling often holds a far greater risk of serious injury as you age. Regular exercise helps to strengthen muscle and improve balance, lowering your risk of falling.

Getting regular exercise helps to tire your body out in a good way which may help you fall asleep more quickly, sleep longer, and get better quality sleep.

Exercise helps increase circulation which improves oxygen delivery to the cells in your body. This is especially important when it comes to supplying your brain with enough oxygen to keep cells healthy and functioning properly. It may even reduce your risk of certain age-related cognitive conditions, such as dementia.

You may notice that you're not quite as supple as you used to be, your range of motion isn't that great anymore. Well, exercise can help you with that too. Keeping your body moving and including stretching will help increase your flexibility and your range of motion, which ultimately also helps prevent injury.

## Types of Exercise as You Age

When you're young, full of energy, and fearless; you can enjoy pretty much any exercise you want, from contact sport to tai chi. As you get older, though, your choice of exercise becomes a bit more limited as you may not be as spry or fearless as you once were. However, that doesn't mean that you don't have any choice at all. There are three categories of exercise you should include in an active lifestyle as you get older.

## **Cardio and Endurance**

When someone mentions cardio, do you automatically think of running followed shortly by, “But, I’m too old for that!”? Perhaps you are no longer in your running prime, or maybe you just hate running altogether. Cardio doesn’t have to mean just running, it is any form of exercise that gets your heart rate up and your lungs working. You should do 30 minutes of cardio per day, and you have a list of options to choose from. Here are just a few of them:

- Walking is the most gentle form of cardio, and it’s generally preferred by older people who want to keep active.
- Stationary cycling is another great choice, placing no impact on your knees.
- Swimming is perfect for “water babies,” and you can swim lengths in a swimming pool or join a water aerobics class.

**Tip:** If you haven’t exercised in a long time or are just starting and find that you get tired easily, you don’t have to do all 30 minutes in a lump sum. You can try doing 10-minute sessions several times a day.

## **Strength and Resistance**

Strength and resistance exercises help to build and maintain muscle, which is important to prevent muscle loss as you age. Strength training also helps improve bone density, and your balance will also benefit. You don’t have to be hitting the major weights either. You should always start with and use only a weight that you can comfortably use, but that still challenges your muscles. Your choice of strength and resistance training equipment includes:

- Resistance bands.
- Weights.
- Bodyweight exercise, also called calisthenics, needs no equipment at all. They can also be modified to offer extra support by using walls, floors, and furniture. Examples include chair squats and wall press-ups, to name a few. You should aim for between two and three resistance and strength workouts per week. Ideally, you should try to work out each major muscle group with one or two sets of between 10 and 15 repetitions of each exercise. The effort you put in should be moderate, but you shouldn't be straining yourself.

### **Stretching and Flexibility**

Stretching has many benefits for both younger and older women, but it becomes increasingly important as you get older. Mobility, muscle strength, flexibility, and balance are all part of keeping your body moving and preventing injury. You can also reduce how sore and stiff your muscles get, especially after any form of physical activity, whether it's exercise or in your day-to-day life. Some forms of stretching can also serve as a time to meditate, quiet your mind and improve your mental health. Traditional stretching, like before and after exercise, as well as yoga and Pilates, is an excellent option for older women who want to stay supple and toned.

### **Exercise Safely While Intermittent Fasting**

So, we've explained that exercise is a vital part of feeling young and staying healthy as you age. However, when you engage in intermittent fasting, exercising is a little different.

There are both pluses and negatives to exercising in a fasted state. You need to know what you are dealing with and how to exercise safely while intermittent fasting.

Exercising during your fasting period has the potential to burn more fat.

Exercising in a fasted state could also potentially cause catabolism or the breaking down of muscle to use as fuel.

Exercising in a fasted state also poses the risk of underperforming, causing your blood sugar levels to drop really low, and light-headedness may increase the risk of injury.

While it is safe to exercise while engaging in intermittent fasting, there are a few things that you must take into account so that you do it right and ensure that it is safe.

## Get the Timing Right

Time your workouts properly. It may be tempting to exercise in a fasted state because there is a chance that it may accelerate weight loss by burning fat to fuel your workout instead of burning calories from food. However, because of the risks it poses, intense exercise while fasting is not recommended.

Instead of exercising in a fasted state, schedule your exercise during your eating window. This provides your body with the necessary fuel to perform adequately during more intense exercises, such as cardio, strength, and resistance training. Try exercising after meals, so that your body has fuel to burn. Remember that intermittent fasting inherently burns fat for fuel during your fasting period, so you don't need to put

yourself at risk by pushing your body to its limit during that time to shed pounds.

If you want to perform exercises while fasting, consider gentle exercise. This is an exercise that isn't going to get your heart rate up and burn tons of calories, but it will still keep you moving. Examples of gentle exercise include walking, yoga, stretching, and gentle Pilates.

Don't forget to listen to your body. If you do choose to exercise, whether you opt for a low or high-intensity form of exercise, listen to the cues your body is giving you. If you hit the wall (the term for running out of energy and being unable to perform), stop exercising and don't push beyond this point. Once you have run out of steam, you risk doing your body harm by insisting on continuing to exercise.

## Bringing it all Together

Intermittent fasting, alone, won't be effective in keeping you as healthy as you could be and meeting your weight loss goals. You have to combine intermittent fasting with a healthy, calorie-conscious diet and regular exercise.

It is also imperative to understand that not all intermittent fasting plans can be followed indefinitely. Some are effective when practiced for shorter periods while others can be practiced over a more long-term period. You may also reach a point when you no longer want to engage in intermittent fasting. You may have reached your goals, improved your health, or lost those pesky pounds that just wouldn't budge. That's great. However, where do you go from there?

It is important to start building a healthy lifestyle while you are practicing intermittent fasting. This is the time to build



long-lasting healthy habits that will carry on once you no longer want to engage in fasting anymore. Not only that, they will ensure that the benefits you gain from intermittent fasting carry on into your future as well.

These healthy habits will be the difference between maintaining health after you stop intermittent fasting or going backward quickly. If you simply stop intermittent fasting and give up your healthy diet and regular exercise, pretty much all is lost. Many other diets that prove difficult to maintain over a long-term period may offer short-term results that you are happy with. However, most people simply return to their old habits and the lifestyle they had before going on the diet. All this does is bring back the weight and bring back the health issues. Therefore, it is vital to adopt a healthy, balanced diet, like the Mediterranean diet, that is manageable and can easily be maintained for the rest of your life. You must keep this diet going after you are no longer fasting to ensure a healthy body.

The same goes for exercise. Develop an exercise regime that is easily continued in the long run so that you maintain your fitness and keep the health concerns at bay that are associated with being unfit.

Intermittent fasting isn't a quick fix for health problems and weight loss. It should be combined with diet and exercise to create a healthy lifestyle that can continue after you finish fasting.

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## TYPES OF INTERMITTENT FASTING

**Y**ou may think that fasting, is fasting, is fasting, right? No, not quite. Fasting means abstaining from food and beverages that contain calories, but there are different ways to go about it. As intermittent fasting has become more and more popular, it has branched out into different variations to suit the growing number of individuals with different needs and preferences. Some types of intermittent fasting work better for some and not for others. Some are statistically easier to follow and maintain than others. Let's delve into the different intermittent fasting programs available so that you can make an informed decision about which one will be best for your particular needs.

There are several types of intermittent fasting plans, including:

- The 16:8 intermittent fasting plan.
- The 5:2 intermittent fasting schedule.
- The Fast 800 Program.
- Choose Your Day Intermittent Fasting Method.
- The Warrior Diet.
- Eat Stop Eat Intermittent Fasting.
- Alternate Day Intermittent Fasting.

We'll discuss each according to popularity, success rate, and suitability for women.

## Voted Most Popular: 16:8 Intermittent Fasting

The 16:8 intermittent fasting is also commonly referred to as the 16:8 plan, or the 16:8 diet. Less commonly, it may also be referred to as the Leangains method, time-restricted fasting (TMF), time-restricted eating (TME), or time-restricted feeding (TMF). The name is pretty self-explanatory; you fast for 16 hours per day and allow yourself an eight-hour window in which you can eat your daily calories. Currently, this is one of the most popular intermittent fasting plans available, and many people find it to be the easiest one to stick to over a longer period.

### **How do you do it?**

You can pretty much schedule your intermittent fasting plan according to your daily timetable. However, it is probably best to schedule your eight-hour eating window in the middle part of the day. Why the middle part of the day?

It's believed that scheduling your eating window in the middle of the day best suits the natural human circadian rhythm. In other words, it closely mimics eating times according to your natural internal clock. There are two types of animals that are awake during the day, diurnal and crepuscular. Crepuscular animals are most active at dusk and dawn, while resting during the middle of the day. Diurnal animals are active throughout daylight hours and spend the middle part of the day feeding. While some like to be awake at night and might be labeled 'night owls', humans are naturally diurnal. This puts the 16:8 intermittent fasting eating window smack-dab in the most

ideal time of day for your natural rhythm. This is possibly one of the aspects that makes this intermittent fasting plan so easy to follow.

Another benefit of the 16:8 plan is that you can schedule your eating window so that your last meal is at a reasonable time before you go to bed. Why does this matter? It is suggested that waiting a period of two to four hours between eating your last meal and going to sleep may have health benefits. During this time; your meal is partly digested, moving from your stomach into your intestines. One of the benefits of this is that it prevents potential heartburn and reflux when you lie down.

You are also not putting your body into 'idle mode' with a full stomach, which naturally drastically slows down all bodily functions; digestion and metabolism are no exception. Eating too close to your bedtime may also interfere with your quality of sleep. Your body's release of insulin is related to that internal clock of yours. When insulin is released after a meal, it may well cause your body to wake up. Becoming more awake when you are trying to relax before bed can lead to trouble falling asleep and staying asleep to get a good night's rest.

The 16:8 intermittent fasting plan has another sneaky trick up its sleeve. Adults typically need around seven to nine hours of sleep each night. When you schedule your 16:8 plan eating window in the middle part of the day, you are planning to spend seven to nine hours of your fasting period asleep. This means that you spend less time feeling the effects of fasting, such as hunger.

### **Variation and Flexibility**

An attractive feature of the typical 16:8 intermittent fasting plan is the possibility of variation and flexibility. You are not

tied down to exact hours for starting and ending your fast. You can start and end according to your schedule. Even if you are a shift worker, you can adjust your fasting period according to your waking hours and sleeping hours. You also don't have to stick to a strict 16:8 plan. You can vary your fasting period to find out what works best for you. Variations include:

12:12

- 14:10
- 16:8
- 18:6
- 20:4

You can extend or decrease your fasting period according to the length of time you can personally handle going without food. You can start with a smaller fasting window and gradually increase it as you adjust to the intermittent fasting lifestyle. For example, you can start with the 12:12 version for a week or two, and then increase to the 14:10, and so on until you reach the fasting-eating ratio that feels best for you.

Important note: It is suggested that women embarking on the 16:8 intermittent fasting plan opt for a shorter fasting period of around 14 to 15 hours at a stretch. This is because women seem to do better with shorter fasting periods where they abstain from food completely.

Examples of scheduled eating window times:

- 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
- 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.
- Noon to 8:00 p.m.

You should schedule your eating window according to your daily timetable. For example, if you don't get home until 6 p.m., typically eat dinner around 7 p.m., and go to bed around 10 p.m.; you should schedule your eating window between 11 a.m. and 7 p.m. This gives you a two to three-hour gap between your last meal and going to sleep, and it fits in with your natural waking and active hours.

### Voted Best for Women: 5:2 Intermittent Fasting

The 5:2 intermittent fasting plan is also known as the fast diet. This is possibly the easiest intermittent fasting plan out there. It's popular, and it is the ideal starting point for anyone who wants to try intermittent fasting but feels intimidated by more intense fasting plans. It allows you to "dip your toes in the water", so to speak, without having to commit to long hours, or even whole days, of no food at all. The 5:2 plan is also considered the best intermittent fasting schedule for women.

Women typically fare better on shorter fasting periods. As a woman, fasting can have an impact on your hormones which can affect fertility and cause an imbalance, making shorter fasts more ideal. The 5:2 method of fasting minimizes the stress placed on your body, and thus also minimizes the impact on your hormones. So, how does the 5:2 plan work?

#### **How do you do it?**

The 5:2 intermittent fasting plan consists of two parts. For five days of the week, you eat normally. For two days of the week, you follow a very low-calorie diet. Wait, what? Where's the fasting in all of this? With the 5:2 plan, there is no hard fasting, which is part of why it can seem effortless to do, and what makes it a great stepping stone for easing into

intermittent fasting. Once you have this method under your belt, you may decide to step it up a notch and practice a stricter form of intermittent fasting that involves actual abstinence from food.

This plan is very flexible, which is another part of its appeal. You can decide from week-to-week, which days you will plan as ‘fasting’ days and on which days you will eat normally. The only scheduling rule is that there is at least one non-fasting day between your two fasting days. Having such a great degree of flexibility means that you can tailor your fasting schedule to your needs. For instance, if your life revolves around planning and routine, you can stick to the same fasting days every week. If you are more spontaneous or your life is more up in the air with no set routine, you can pick and choose your fasting days as you go along.

Another perk to the 5:2 plan’s flexibility is that you don’t have to feel uncomfortable in social situations because you’re the only one not enjoying a meal or drinks. This can often lead to avoiding social situations when people practice intermittent fasting, especially in the beginning. If you have an event to attend—a birthday, a girls’ night out, etc.—on a scheduled fasting day, you can simply schedule your fasting day for the day before or after. Remember to ensure that you don’t double stack your fasting days, and allow at least one ‘normal’ day in between. This way, you can have your cake and eat it too by enjoying your social life and still practicing intermittent fasting.

We mentioned that the 5:2 plan has no actual hard fasting where you abstain from food for any period. So, how does this work? On your fasting days, you restrict your intake to only 500 calories for the day. You can decide to eat two small meals of 250 calories each or perhaps you want to graze on very low-

calorie food, such as small salads, throughout the day. However, you choose to fill those 500 calories is up to you.

**Important note:** It is crucial to ensure that you eat a normal, healthy diet on your non-fasting days. Binging on junk food will increase your calorie intake and cancel out any benefit you get from fasting. Even worse, it could lead to weight gain. Be mindful of following a healthy diet that provides you with all the nutrition you need and doesn't exceed your average daily calorie needs.

## The Fast 800 Program

The Fast 800 is a staggered process of intermittent fasting plan developed by Dr. Michael Mosley and, like the original 5:2 intermittent fasting plan, it has no hard fasting, so no complete abstinence from food. It involves three separate stages:

- The Very Fast 800.
- The New 5:2.
- Way of Life.

The first stage of the plan, The Very Fast 800, is aimed at rapid weight loss, and should be practiced for at least two weeks. If you feel that you can maintain this first stage of the plan, you can keep it up for a maximum of 12 weeks or three months. How long you stick to the first stage will depend on your degree of comfort, as well as your weight loss goals.

During this stage of the program, you eat only 800 calories a day, every day. Following a Mediterranean diet is ideal for this type of low-calorie diet, because you are filling up on nutritious food that will keep you feeling satisfied for longer. However, this intensive approach to weight loss using a low-



calorie plan for between two and 12 weeks isn't for everyone. It can be difficult to maintain a low-calorie diet for an extended period, compared to the 5:2 method described above.

The second stage of this program is called The New 5:2 diet. This stage takes inspiration from the traditional 5:2 intermittent fasting program. You will be choosing two days a week to 'fast'. You will eat normally for the remaining five days of the week.

This stage of the plan offers all of the same flexibility as the 5:2 diet. You can choose which days to fast, you can switch them up week-to-week, and you just need to ensure that you have at least one non-fasting day between your two fasting days. You can continue with this second stage of the program indefinitely or until you have met your health and weight loss goals. When you decide you no longer want to have any fasting days, you can move onto the way of life stage of the program.

The third stage of the program is called Way of Life, and it's a maintenance plan. This is simply the act of following a healthy, balanced diet indefinitely into the future. Once you have reached your goals, maintaining that progress is important; otherwise, you will just find yourself having to start from the beginning all over again.

This kind of staggered approach to an intermittent fasting program may be highly beneficial for some. It starts more intensely and ends in maintenance instead of simply hopping off the intermittent fasting bus altogether. It may also be easier to follow than other intermittent fasting plans that have hard fasting periods where you don't eat at all for prolonged periods.

## Choose Your Day Intermittent Fasting

This method of intermittent fasting follows the principle of the 16:8 Intermittent Fasting method, but with a twist. It can be likened to a ‘skip a meal every other day’ method of intermittent fasting. Instead of strictly fasting for a set period every single day, you only do it every other day or a few times a week.

You can follow a similar time-frame to the 16:8 method or you can vary your fasting period according to your mood and preference. Keep in mind that women fare better on a shorter fasting period so it’s probably best to fast for 14 hours at a time instead of longer. If, on a particular day, you feel that you can manage longer, go for it. If there is a day that you think that you just can’t fast, that’s okay, then you don’t. This is especially useful if you are feeling unwell and feel that fasting will only make you feel worse.

For example:

- Monday – Eat normally.
- Tuesday – Eat normally.
- Wednesday – Fast from dinner on Tuesday night to noon on Wednesday.
- Thursday – Eat normally.
- Friday – Fast from dinner on Thursday night to mid-afternoon on Friday
- Saturday – Eat normally.
- Sunday – Do an overnight fast from dinner on Saturday night to late morning on Sunday.

The idea is to fast a few times a week for a period of between 12 and 14 or more hours, without having to adhere to this

schedule day in and day out, day after day.

## The Warrior Diet

In 2001 Ori Hofmekler came up with the Warrior Diet. The plan is modeled on the ways of eating used by warriors of old. They would not eat very much during the daytime, but would enjoy nightly feasts. An important point to bear in mind is that Hofmekler, himself, admits that this diet is not based on science alone. It is also based on his personal beliefs and what he has observed following this diet during his time serving in the Israeli Special Forces.

This is another intermittent fasting diet plan that doesn't involve strict abstinence from food for prolonged periods. It focuses, rather, on what is called undereating. You can eat, but the food you eat during your fasting period must be extremely low calorie, or what is known as zero calorie, foods.

### **How do you do it?**

The Warrior Diet observes a 20:4 fasting to eating ratio whereby you fast or undereat for 20 hours of the day, and feast in a four-hour eating window. During the fasting period, eating small quantities of low-calorie vegetables, fruits, and even some dairy and eggs is encouraged. As with other intermittent fasting diets, drinking lots of zero-calorie fluids is a must. Once your 20-hour fasting period is up, you can pretty much go wild and eat whatever you want to make up your daily calories. However, there is a caution to this tale, going wild doesn't mean exceeding your daily caloric needs, as this won't lead to weight loss, but rather weight gain.

A rule of thumb is to not consume more than 10% to 15% of your daily caloric needs during the 20-hour fasting period.

During your four-hour feasting window, you should eat 85% to 90% of your daily caloric needs.

While feasting could, theoretically, lead to consuming too many calories if you binge on junk food, if you follow a healthy diet, you are likely to consume fewer calories than you need. This naturally creates a calorie deficit which, combined with under eating the other 20 hours a day, may lead to rapid weight loss.

**Important note:** This is not a sustainable intermittent fasting plan for most people. Many struggle with this diet, and it can have some dangerous side effects. This cycle of under eating and binging could easily lead to disordered eating in a bulimic fashion, which has potentially detrimental long-term effects. Another drawback of the Warrior Diet is the very real risk of becoming malnourished. When you are essentially eating only a single large meal per day, it can be difficult to get all the nutrients you need. Therefore, it is recommended that you eat a healthy, balanced diet packed with a variety of nutrient-dense foods to ensure that you get the nutrition your body needs.

Similar to the Fast 800 program, the Warrior Diet can be broken down into a three-week plan to get you started. After the initial three weeks, you can decide how you would like to continue, and if you would like to continue depending on your health and weight loss goals. After completing the initial three-week introduction, Hofmekler recommends either cycling through the stages from the beginning or simply continuing with the third stage until you reach your goals.

Week one or phase one:

- Eat small amounts of low-calorie vegetables, fruits, vegetable juices, dairy, eggs, or clear broth during the 20-hour restrictive period. The idea is to under eat up to only 15% of your daily caloric needs.
- Eat a salad with vinegar and oil dressing, as well as one or more large meals based on non-wheat whole grains, plant proteins, some cooked vegetables and dairy, such as cheese.
- Ensure that you hydrate adequately with zero-calorie drinks during the day, such as water, coffee, tea, and a little milk.

Week two or phase two:

- This is a high-fat phase of the diet.
- Eat small amounts of low-calorie vegetables, fruits, vegetable juices, dairy, eggs, or clear broth during the 20-hour restrictive period. The idea is to under eat up to only 15% of your daily caloric needs.
- Eat a salad with vinegar and oil dressing, as well as one or more large meals, based on cooked vegetables and lean animal protein, as well as a minimum of one, preferably more, handful of nuts.
- This phase eliminates all starches and grains.

Week three or phase three:

The third phase of the diet plan alternates between high-protein days and high-carb days for your feasting period. You follow the same 20-hour under-eating guidelines as in phases one and two, but alternate between high protein and high carb days at night.

For example:

- One to two days of high carbohydrates and moderate protein.
- One to two days of low carbohydrates and high protein.
- One to two days of high carbohydrates and moderate protein.

And so on.

## Eat Stop Eat Intermittent Fasting

The Eat Stop Eat method may seem similar to the Alternate Day intermittent fasting method at first glance, but they are somewhat different. When following the Eat Stop Eat method, you practice fasting approximately twice per week. You space out your fasting days with two non-fasting days in between. While this spacing does work out to two fasting days per week, there will be a week where there will be three fasting days in seven days.

For example:

- Monday – Eat normally.
- Tuesday – Eat normally.
- Wednesday – Fast.
- Thursday – Eat normally.
- Friday – Eat normally.
- Saturday – Fast.
- Sunday – Eat normally.

However, now and then you will end up with a week that looks like this:

- Monday – Fast.
- Tuesday – Eat normally.
- Wednesday – Eat normally.
- Thursday – Fast.
- Friday – Eat normally.
- Saturday – Eat normally.
- Sunday – Fast.

The Eat Stop Eat intermittent fasting method is exactly what it sounds like. You eat normally for two days followed by a complete 24-hour or whole-day fast. During this fasting period, you are allowed only zero-calorie beverages such as unsweetened coffee and tea without added milk, cream, or creamer and water or zero-sugar carbonated drinks.

For Example:

If you have dinner at 6:00 p.m. on Monday, your fast will last until 6:00 p.m. on Tuesday, when you have dinner again. You will then eat your regular meals through Wednesday, until Thursday night, before beginning your fast again after dinner on Thursday night, fasting till dinner on Friday night again.

You may choose which meal is your last; dinner may be a good option as you will spend the first portion of your 24-hour fast asleep, and minimizing how much time of that 24-hour period you feel hungry. If you make breakfast your last meal, you will only sleep through the last portion of your 24-hour fast, leaving you feeling the hunger pangs early on in the fast instead of only later on.

Important note: Be sure to eat a healthy, balanced diet and to be mindful of how much you eat on non-fasting days so that you don't compensate for the lost calories. Overeating on 'normal' days can happen without you even realizing it. While

the fasting will do its fat-busting job on your fasting days, if you overeat on your non-fasting days, you will just put the fat right back as fast as you're burning it.

## Alternate Day Intermittent Fasting

Alternate Day fasting is also referred to as 1:1 intermittent fasting. This can often be a difficult method of intermittent fasting for many people to stick to. You eat normally every second day and fast every other day. This method of fasting doesn't involve hard fasting periods of complete abstinence from food. Instead, you limit your calorie intake on your fasting days. Deciding what you want to limit your calorie to is dependent on personal preference.

When deciding your fasting day calorie limit, you can take inspiration from either the original 5:2 Diet or the Fast 800 Diet. This means limiting your calories to between 500 and 800 calories per day when fasting. If you decide on Alternate Day fasting and start with a limit of 500 calories but find that it's difficult to manage, try increasing your calories to 800. You always have the option of lowering your calories to 500 once your body gets used to the alternating fasting schedule.

**Important note:** As with the Eat Stop Eat method, be sure to eat a healthy, balanced diet and to be mindful of how much you eat on non-fasting days, so that you don't compensate for the lost calories. Overeating on 'normal' days can happen without you even realizing it. While the fasting will do its fat-busting job on your fasting days, if you overeat on your non-fasting days you will just put the fat right back as fast as you're burning it.



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## GET YOUR MINDSET RIGHT

**T**he way you think about food and yourself, your whole mindset, can either set you up for intermittent fasting success or it can drag you down into failure. It's literally all in your mind. What kind of mindset do you need to cultivate to be successful at intermittent fasting? How do you change the way you think so that you can take on fasting and win? We're going to let you in on the secrets of the psychology of intermittent fasting.

### Psychological Barriers to Intermittent Fasting

Three ways of thinking could be holding you back from successful fasting. You need to break through those psychological barriers and alter the way you think. Once you do that, nothing can stand in your way.

#### **Core Beliefs**

What are your core beliefs and how do they shape your life? Your core beliefs are deeply ingrained. They are often instilled during childhood when your mind and personality are still developing. Core beliefs refer to how you think about anything and everything from yourself and other people to the world at large. For the most part, core beliefs are subconscious; you

may not even realize that you have a particular belief about something that could be holding you back because it's just the way you think about it.

Core beliefs come from the teachings of parents and experiences you have in life, both as a child and powerful experiences as an adult. In fact, intense experiences as an adult can even change a core belief that was instilled as a child. They are often quite strong and deeply rooted so changing them may come as a challenge. However, identifying those strong beliefs about food and fasting and then changing them will help you overcome this psychological barrier, increasing your success.

### **How to Change Fasting Core Beliefs**

Core beliefs about fasting that stand in your way of success commonly look like this:

- You may have the self-deprecating belief that you don't deserve to lose weight or be healthy. You may secretly and subconsciously tell yourself that you deserve to be overweight or unattractive or unhealthy.
- You may view fasting as a form of self-starvation and that it isn't healthy or that it is even harmful.
- You may have the belief about putting in the effort that is standing in your way. In this age of instant gratification without putting in much effort, you may believe that if something isn't easy to achieve or if it doesn't happen quickly that you cannot do it.
- Strange as it may seem, deep down you may actually believe that you will be left vulnerable if you lose weight.

Instead of viewing fasting in this negative light, change the way you think about it by replacing those thoughts with different ones. For example:

- If you have that self-deprecating belief that you deserve to be overweight or unhealthy, change it to a belief that you do deserve health and to lose weight. Start believing that you are worth improving for your own happiness and that you enjoy making those improvements.
- If you believe that fasting is bad for you, it equates to self-starvation and that it is harmful; change that to believe that fasting is, in fact, healthy and that it empowers you.
- If you believe that you can't do something because it isn't easy to achieve or because it doesn't happen right away, start believing that you can do it. Believe that you can achieve anything you want if you want it badly enough.
- If you feel that losing weight will leave you vulnerable, it won't. Start believing that it will make you feel in control and strong.

These are just a few examples, and you don't necessarily have them. Your beliefs about fasting may be different. However, the take-home message remains the same. Replacing negative core beliefs with something more positive is essential when it comes to intermittent fasting. That change will take constant practice to take effect, but once you change those core beliefs, the new ones will stick with you and make intermittent fasting feel more positive.

### **Self-Talk**

What is self-talk and how does it affect intermittent fasting? Have you ever caught yourself talking to yourself about something that pertains to you? It may be silently, inside your mind, or it could be out loud. Self-talk refers to how you talk to yourself about yourself. This internal dialogue that you have with yourself shapes the way you see yourself and even affects your emotions. Ultimately, those emotions and internal dialogue influence your behavior. Self-talk is often linked to core beliefs. You will need to change your core beliefs and your self-talk at the same time.

You may not even realize that you are telling yourself these things about yourself. Self-talk also happens often, and it's repetitive. It is important to identify that negative self-talk, and change it into something positive so that you don't stand in your own way when it comes to intermittent fasting success.

For example:

You may look at yourself in the mirror and tell yourself that you are unattractive. This will make you feel bad about yourself. These emotions may lead to behavior such as always trying to stay out of the limelight and not attract any attention to yourself. Another way in which that negative self-talk could affect your behavior is that you never buy yourself clothes that you like because you tell yourself that you don't look good in them and that people will judge you for wearing them.

You need to identify the negative self-talk going on in your mind regarding your health, your appearance, and intermittent fasting, and change those thoughts. When you catch yourself saying something negative to yourself, actively challenge that thought by replacing it with something positive. It may even help to say this new positive thought out loud and not just in your mind, verbalize it to give it more power.

## **Food Rules**

Food rules shape how you view and interact with food. You may be taught these rules by your parents or pick them up from others, or even society and the media. These rules aren't necessarily good or bad, they just are what they are, but they can be either correct or incorrect.

An example of a food rule may be to look at some of the popular diets out there. Take a low-carb diet, for instance. Those who follow low-carb diets have the rule of not eating carbs because they hold the belief, and tell themselves, that carbohydrates are bad for them. This may or may not be accurate. Carbohydrates cannot be either good or bad. They are simply a form of fuel for your body. However, should these people experience weight loss success following a low-carb diet, it reinforces their belief that carbs are bad. However, just because they feel healthier and lose weight doesn't make it true that carbs are, in fact, bad.

Food rules may be standing in your way of health and weight loss, they could be a barrier between you and intermittent fasting success. To achieve success, you need to identify food rules you already have. Once you have identified them, you need to analyze them to see whether they are helping you or whether they are holding you back. Again, this process comes back to challenging and changing beliefs and self-talk about these rules. After all, you wouldn't have them if you didn't believe the reason behind having them.

## **How to Change Food Rules**

Some common food rules that could hold you back include:

- Perhaps you believe that breakfast is the most important meal of the day because that is what you

were taught as a child and what society has always told you.

- You might believe that you must eat when other people eat.
- Perhaps you believe that socializing, whether on a date or with friends or even at a function, and eating are inextricably linked and that these situations must involve food.
- You may believe that turning down food is extremely rude.

These are examples of when intermittent fasting is made nearly impossible by food rules that aren't necessarily true. You need to change them by challenging how you think about them.

- If your food rule is to always eat breakfast because you believe that it is the most important meal of the day, realize that it is not true and that it isn't helping you. Decide to only follow food rules that you will benefit from.
- If you believe that you must eat when other people eat, make the decision that you have control over what you eat, when you eat, and where you eat.
- If you find yourself being unable to separate food and socializing, realize how much that link is limiting your options for being social to only situations and places where food is available. Food isn't what socializing is about, spending time with others is. Your options will also increase.
- Do you think that turning food down is rude? Realize that feeling obligated to eat food that is offered to you isn't helping you, and may even be unhealthy for you.

Understand that, when done politely, others don't have any right to feel offended when you say, "No. Thank you."

These are just a few examples of unnecessary food rules and how they can be changed. Your food rules may be different, but the process is the same. Identify the rules, change the belief behind them, and how you talk to yourself about those rules. Experience fewer difficulties and greater intermittent fasting success.

## Overcome Emotional Eating

A psychological and emotional hurdle that you have to overcome to be able to fast without being miserable is emotional eating habits. If you're picturing someone crying and eating a large tub of ice cream after a breakup, you have the right idea. If you eat to satisfy your emotions, fasting becomes a constant battle, and you are at risk of giving in the moment you feel stressed.

Emotional eating is reaching for food in response to emotions. You aren't eating because you're hungry, you're eating because you think that it makes you feel good or because you're trying to feel comfortable in the face of negative emotion. You may even use food as a reward in response to achievement, because you think it makes that achievement feel even better. Emotional eating may be such an ingrained habit that you don't even realize you are using food in response to emotions.

How do you know if you are, indeed, an emotional eater? Ask yourself the following questions:

- Do you ever find yourself eating when you aren't even hungry or when your stomach is already full?
- Do you often continue eating past the point of feeling comfortably satisfied until you feel fit to burst?
- Do you ever feel as though you cannot control yourself around food?
- Do you reach for food as a way to feel better, calm yourself, soothe yourself when you are feeling negative emotions that are hard to handle?
- Are you prone to eating more when you are feeling stressed out?
- Do you use food as a reward for achievements?
- Do you view food as sort of a friend? Do you find that food makes you feel safe, almost like a security blanket makes a child feel safe?

The behavior and thoughts behind these questions are all potential signs of emotional eating. Realizing that you are eating for emotional satisfaction or relief is the first step. How do you identify your hunger as emotional hunger versus real, physical, hunger?

- Sudden hunger is likely emotional, while slowly becoming hungry and getting hungrier is physical.
- You feel the need to immediately satisfy emotional hunger whereas you feel that physical hunger can wait a while longer.
- Craving specific, often unhealthy, foods that are common comfort foods is probably emotional hunger. A variety of options will satisfy physical hunger, because different things sound equally as good.
- When your stomach is full, physical hunger goes away, but emotional hunger hangs around even after



you feel like you're about to burst.

- When you use food to plug an emotional hole or comfort yourself, you are often plagued by feelings of shame and guilt. When you eat because your body is physically hungry, you don't feel guilty about it.

### **Identify the Cause**

Pinpoint what triggers you to eat when you aren't physically hungry. You can only start replacing emotional eating habits with healthier habits when you know what causes you to reach for comfort food.

Common reasons emotional eating is triggered include:

- Stress.
- Unpleasant emotions you don't want to deal with.
- Childhood association with food as a reward from parents for good behavior, or achievements, or as a means of comfort when you were sad.
- Feeling bored or empty.
- Social situations may lead to overeating simply because food is available, because you are nervous, or even because someone may be encouraging you to eat too much.

### **Emotional Eating Replacement Strategies**

- Try reaching out to someone who you know can make you feel better if you are feeling lonely or upset. You may also play with a pet or look at something that generally makes you happy.
- Getting out for a brisk walk or using a stress ball can relieve nervousness or anxiety.

- If you are in the grip of boredom, find something to keep you busy or entertained, such as a movie, book, a hobby, etc.
- Treat exhaustion by treating yourself to something more pampering than food, such as a hot bath or shower, scented candles, scented body lotion, etc.
- Deal with unpleasant emotions by facing them instead of trying to bury them under food. It's hard and it's not fun, but the sooner you learn to face those emotions and deal with them, the sooner you can get a handle on your emotional eating.

It is important to find healthy coping strategies to replace emotional eating. What works for others may not be effective for you. Consider common replacement strategies and try them out. If they don't work for you, try something else until you find what will satisfy your emotions and comfort you.

## Intermittent Fasting is not a Diet

We've said this before, and we'll say it again because this time we'll tell you why it's so important to remember this statement. Intermittent fasting is not a diet, and you shouldn't view it as one. Why? The way you look at and label intermittent fasting affects how you do it and how successful you will be in both the short-term and long-term.

The word 'diet' often has slightly negative connotations attached to it. When you hear the word diet, the chances are that you think of small portions, counting calories, weighing food, and all things 'lite' and 'fat-free'. Do you see how you already associate dieting with unpleasant behavior and skewed food perceptions? You'll probably associate it with self-

deprivation, grumpiness, and intense cravings. You may even picture diet aid advertisements for all sorts of shakes, pills, drops, drinks, juicing appliances, and more. If you've ever dieted before, you know exactly what we're talking about and how unpleasant an experience it can be. For all of these reasons; the moment something is labeled as a 'diet', it becomes something unappealing that you suffer through for as short a period of time as possible so that you can see drastic short-term results.

You don't want to think about intermittent fasting like this. It will only foster a negative attitude toward fasting before you even begin. When you look at something in a negative light, it makes everything about it seem more difficult and more unpleasant than it is. Let's face facts for a moment. Intermittent fasting isn't going to be easy, at least not in the beginning. It takes mental grit and willpower to change your body and your lifestyle.

That is exactly what intermittent fasting is; it's a lifestyle. You must change your perception of fasting from a diet to a lifestyle. A lifestyle change comes with more positive connotations than a diet. Lifestyle changes are viewed as positive and lasting that will bring about something that you want. In this case, it's health, weight loss, and maintaining a healthy weight. When you view something more positively, even the difficult parts that take some getting used to seem less difficult. Essentially, re-labeling intermittent fasting as a lifestyle and not a diet helps to change your mental attitude toward it. Cultivating the right mindset is crucial to success.

Help yourself view intermittent fasting as a lifestyle by ditching the idea that it's a quick fix to deliver results in the short-term. Crash diets deliver quick results, but they are also largely unhealthy, and most of the time the results don't last

very long. You want results that you can enjoy over the long term. You want better health and to maintain a healthy weight for the rest of your life. You can only do that if you make a lifestyle change, and changing your lifestyle doesn't happen overnight.

## Patience is a Virtue and You Need it

Be patient with your results. Social media and the internet are full of stories about people having lost huge amounts of weight in a very short period using intermittent fasting. These drastic fast weight loss stories only serve to solidify the idea that fasting is a diet. Challenge and change this thought process by being patient with your results. Healthy weight loss is a maximum of two pounds per week. Losing more than that crosses the line of being unhealthy and runs the risk of consequences, such as gaining all the weight back and then some, as well as health issues. Part of looking at intermittent fasting as a lifestyle is to embrace gradual change in your body and health.

When your expectation is seeing big changes quickly, you will increase your frustration if the changes take time, and weaken your resolve to keep at it. You may make the snap judgment that intermittent fasting isn't working and give up before you give your body a chance to adapt and improve.

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## STARTING INTERMITTENT FASTING

**H**ow do you start intermittent fasting and what can you expect when you begin? It's not all sunshine and roses in the early stages, but it gets better with consistency, and soon enough it becomes 'just another day at the office'.

### How to Start Intermittent Fasting

The very first thing you must do is consult your doctor. When you decide that intermittent fasting is what you want to do, make an appointment with a medical professional. Only a qualified doctor will be able to tell you whether it is safe for you to fast.

Before you start fasting, get your diet right. If you are not already following a healthy, balanced diet with good eating habits, then getting onto and maintaining a healthy diet is your first port of call. You can't expect to make a success of intermittent fasting if you are trying to do too much at once. Fasting, in itself, is a big change. Don't overload yourself by starting a brand new diet at the same time. With that being said, let's move on to how you get started with intermittent fasting.

First thing's first, you don't just dive in head-first. You start by getting your feet wet. If you have never fasted before, start small. What does that mean?

- Give overnight fasting a try first. After dinner, fast for 12 hours, or overnight until breakfast the next day. If you eat dinner three hours before bedtime and sleep for seven to nine hours, you will have already fasted between 10 and 12 hours.
- If you snack after dinner, stop snacking. Have dinner and then stop eating. Consider your fasting period as starting the moment you take your last bite.
- Gradually cut out daytime snacks between meals.
- You can gradually increase your fasting period over time so that you don't shock yourself into giving up by going all-in on a 24-hour fast the very first time you try it.
- If you do decide to start with fasting 14 to 16 hours per day, cut yourself some slack if the hunger pangs get too strong. Have a very small, low-carb and low-calorie snack to take the edge off. A snack under 50 calories shouldn't take you out of a fasted state.
- If you intend to practice whole-day fasts, start by restricting your calories on fast days. Gradually eat less and less on those days until you reach a full day fast without eating.
- If you feel unwell at any point during your fasting period, stop. Break your fast. You can always try again tomorrow. Fasting a few hours longer today and risking your health isn't worth it.

The Early Stages: What to Expect

Intermittent fasting is a great way to achieve a healthy body, and even lose some weight along the way. However, what can you expect when you start a fasting program?

**Important note:** Bear in mind that various side effects of intermittent fasting are short-lived. They only last as long as it takes for your body to adjust to this new way of life. The first few weeks will be the hardest; keep reminding yourself of your long-term goal and that whatever you are finding unpleasant won't last forever.

### **Hunger Pangs**

When you first begin fasting, you are going to get hunger pangs, which you will feel most strongly during the first few days after starting. Your body has to adjust to using fat for fuel, instead of sugar from food, during your fasting period. Your body isn't used to this. It wants that sugar, and it's going to tell you that it needs its regular fuel. Your body will get used to the new normal, and those hunger pangs will subside and eventually disappear altogether. The key to successfully giving hunger pangs the boot, though, is to be consistent with your fasting program.

**Important note:** If hunger pangs prevent you from functioning normally in your day-to-day life, eat something and consider shortening your fasting period. The aim isn't to starve your body.

### **Energy and Mood Fluctuations**

When you first start your fasting program, you may find that your energy feels depleted. You may experience fatigue because your body hasn't adjusted to burning fat instead of food to generate energy. When you are feeling like your batteries have run flat and you're hungry, it affects your mood. The term 'hangry' was coined for a reason, and being tired at

the same time intensifies that feeling of irritability. Your mood and energy fluctuations will improve with time, just like your hunger pangs will fade away. As your body stabilizes, so will you; it just takes time.

### **Social Opposition**

Not everyone will understand your intermittent fasting lifestyle choice, and that may be because of two things. They don't understand intermittent fasting, what it is, and how it works. They probably view fasting as being bad for you and something people only do to make a statement; hunger strikes, in other words. Further confusing others is that intermittent fasting isn't a normal part of the western world's way of eating, and it goes against what they've been told their whole life about eating meals spaced out throughout the day.

You must be prepared to face social opposition from others, even from family and friends. You will be questioned about your choice. Others will probably argue with you about your choice. You will get those who will tempt you during fasting periods. You may also come up against unsupportive people among your family and friends.

The best way to handle social opposition is to be knowledgeable about intermittent fasting and its benefits so that you can answer questions properly. Don't entertain arguments, simply assertively state that it is your decision and you do not want to argue about it. Take all the support you can get from the supportive friends and family, and try to block out any unsupportive comments or behavior from others.

**Tip:** If nobody you are close to practices intermittent fasting, prevent feeling isolated by making friends with other fasters on social media or locally.

### **Emotional Control**



Believe it or not, intermittent fasting could help you master emotional control. Learning to control an intense feeling like hunger hones your ability to control. Honing this skill, in turn, allows you to exert better control over lesser emotions. So, you may well find that you gradually become less emotional over the things that used to ruffle your feathers or shake you up before.

## How to Break Your Fast

How do you break your fast? It may seem like a no-brainer. You just eat, right? Not so fast. Before you pick up your knife and fork to enjoy that first meal in hours, there are a few things you need to know about breaking a short-term fast of up to 24 hours.

The first thing you need to do is to make sure that you are well-hydrated. The importance of drinking enough water during fasting periods cannot be stressed enough.

When breaking a fast, there are a few common foods and beverages that may prove difficult for your body to process in that first meal after fasting for several hours. These include:

- Alcohol.
- Eggs and dairy products.
- Nuts and seeds, as well as the different types of seed and nut butter available.
- Uncooked calciferous vegetables, such as cabbage and cauliflower.
- Sometimes individuals may experience difficulty digesting red meat for their first meal.

Don't worry, you won't have to give these foods up altogether, it's just not a good idea to include them in your first meal when breaking your fast.

### **Tips for Breaking Your Fast**

- Choose whole foods and a meal that offers all three macronutrients, carbohydrates, fat, and protein.
- Keep the carbohydrates low and avoid refined carbs.
- Avoid sugary drinks.
- When including carbs, balance them out with fat and protein. A good meal for breaking your fast could be a salad or vegetables with protein.
- Keep the portion size sensible. Yes, you are going to be ravenous by the end of your fast, especially as a newcomer to fasting, but eating too much will leave you feeling uncomfortable. Ideally, choose a portion size somewhere between a small meal and a large snack.

**Important note:** The reason your first meal should be low-carb, including only a small amount of complex carbohydrates with a low glycemic index, is that carbs cause your blood sugar to spike. This has two effects. It stimulates the release of insulin, which not only removes the sugar from your blood, resulting in a crash, but it also leaves you feeling even hungrier. The second thing that happens is that it makes your next fasting period more difficult because it raises your levels of ghrelin, or hunger hormone.

### **What Should You Eat?**

- Bone broth.
- Vegetable soups.

- Vegetable or fruit juices (Try to stick with vegetable juices, as fruit juices contain a lot of sugar that could send you on a blood sugar rollercoaster.)
- Whole fruits and vegetables, especially leafy greens.
- Cooked vegetables.
- Healthy fats, such as avocados and olive oil.
- Protein (Opt for fish or poultry for your first meal.)

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## IF TIPS AND TRICKS

**E**verybody who makes a big lifestyle change could use a little extra help to make that transition easier. Here's our collection of intermittent fasting tips and tricks for healthy, safe, and easier intermittent fasting.

### **Enjoy Hot Drinks**

Hunger is going to be the most noticeable side effect of fasting. One way to help curb your hunger is to enjoy hot beverages, such as coffee and tea. Be sure to leave out the creamer, milk, or cream, and opt for a non-nutritive sweetener that won't add calories that may break your fast.

### **Eat, Don't Feast**

This may be in direct contradiction with the principles of the Warrior Diet, but if you are following any other intermittent fasting method, don't feast when you break your fast. Eating one huge meal after a fasting period could lead to overeating and binging, both of which are unhealthy habits. Other side effects of eating too much when you break your fast include:

- Fatigue.
- Bloating.
- A dramatic spike in blood sugar.

- Crash in blood sugar when your body is flooded with insulin in response to the sudden large increase in blood sugar.
- Consuming too many calories, leading to weight gain instead of weight loss or weight maintenance.

### **Keep Busy**

A serious threat to your fasting period is boredom. When you are bored, you may find yourself focused on your hunger or becoming preoccupied with food, neither of which will help you. Keep yourself busy with a hobby, light exercise, meditation, or pretty much anything that will take your mind off fasting and channel your attention and energy in a positive direction.

### **Keep to a Routine**

- Start and break your fasts at roughly the same time every day, if you are following a daily fasting schedule.
- Try to eat similar meals without large variances.
- Prepare meals in advance.

Routines are useful for helping you get used to your new intermittent fasting lifestyle and make things a little easier to maintain. Did you know that there is such a thing as decision fatigue? Well, there is and if you suffer from it, you could find following a healthy diet and intermittent fasting schedule more difficult. Decision fatigue happens when you have spent a long time constantly making decisions, and that ability to make decisions deteriorates. Having a routine will take some of the guesswork and decision-making out of the process.

You won't have to continually think about:

- When to eat.
- What to eat.
- Whether you have time to cook a meal.
- Whether a meal contains the right amount of macronutrients and calories to fit in with your plan.

### **Choose More Satisfying Meals**

What you eat can help you stick to a healthy diet and maintain fasting periods without giving in to hunger pangs or getting fatigued. Ensuring that meals contain nutrient-dense foods and complex carbohydrates will help you feel fuller for longer. Eating meals that are flavorful and foods that you enjoy, instead of bland foods and depriving yourself of your favorites, will help keep cravings at bay. Part of why regular weight loss ‘diets’ fail is that the food is often unappealing and lacking a proper balance of macronutrients, leaving you feeling unhappy and more tempted to ‘cheat’ on your diet.

### **Eat Enough Protein**

Fasting forces your body to burn fat instead of sugar (carbs), but there is a downside. You could lose lean body mass as well if you don’t provide your body with the correct nutrition. Protein is important for not only building muscle but also maintaining it. Calculating your protein needs and making sure that you eat enough protein will combat muscle loss. Protein will also help fill you up and keep you full, because it takes longer to digest. An average woman needs between 46 and 75 grams of protein per day.

### **Eat Enough Calories**

While you shouldn’t go crazy and use intermittent fasting as a free pass to indulge in junk food or overeat, you should also ensure that you take in enough calories each day. Working out

your caloric needs for your goals will help you decide how much you need. Taking in too few calories consistently isn't good for your health and will make fasting periods even more difficult to maintain. You may also experience more severe unpleasant side effects while fasting.

### **Be Mindful of Your Body**

Fasting places your body under stress, forcing it to adapt to burning fat. You must always be aware of your body and listen to what it is telling you. There are a few signs that your body is switching from fasting to starvation mode at which point you should break for fast for your health. Common symptoms to watch out for include:

- Dizziness.
- Unusual tiredness.
- Unusual mood swings or irritability.
- Headaches.
- Concentration difficulties or brain fog.
- Anxiety.

### **Don't Overdo the Caffeine**

Coffee may help to stave off hunger at times, but be wary of overdoing it. Too much caffeine can worsen the side effects of fasting and cause side effects of its own. Symptoms of too much coffee can include:

- Anxiety.
- Muscle tremors.
- Headaches.
- Feeling jittery.

### **Consider Taking Supplements**

Regular fasting can lead to not taking in enough essential nutrients. Your body may need these nutrients only in small quantities but it needs them nonetheless. Not getting in all the nutrients your body needs can lead to health problems and extra side effects while fasting.

### **Know What Counts**

Knowing what foods and drinks can break your fast is essential to avoid unintentionally bringing your body out of a fasting state. There is much debate about whether or not you can eat while fasting and then what you can and can't eat while fasting. As a rule of thumb; if you are going to eat a small amount while fasting, make sure that what you eat doesn't exceed 50 calories. If you regularly unintentionally break your fast, you are not allowing your body to get into the rhythm of fasting. This will keep your body from adjusting and the unpleasant side effects that should subside will continue.

### **Pick Fasting Times to Suit Your Needs**

There are benefits to making your last meal at night and fasting after dinner. The major benefit of this is that you will be asleep for a large portion of your fast, which may minimize discomfort in the beginning. However, not everybody is the same. Choosing the timing of your fasting period to suit your needs will make intermittent fasting more comfortable and easier to get into and stick with.

If you're a morning person who hates black coffee and can't function without a hearty breakfast, but doesn't eat much at night, change your timing. Start your fast later in the day so that you break your fast in the morning instead of in the late afternoon or evening. For example, if you are following the popular 16:8 method, you may want to break your fast at 8:00



a.m. and have your last meal by 4:00 p.m. You should choose a fasting and eating timeframe that feels best for you.

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## IF MYTHS AND FAQs

**T**here is a lot of conflicting information out there about intermittent fasting. Some of that information is correct, some of it is confusing, and some of it is totally off the mark. We're going to bust some intermittent fasting myths and answer the most frequently asked fasting questions.

### Intermittent Fasting Myths Busted

The myths surrounding intermittent fasting aren't always related to abstinence from food itself. Some of these myths that make you question fasting are general meal myths, some of which are outdated and simply incorrect.

#### **You'll Gain Weight by Skipping Breakfast**

This myth stems from the idea that breakfast is the most important meal of the day and that you should break your overnight fast in the morning. Why do people think that skipping breakfast will make you fat? There is the misconception that skipping 'the most important meal of the day' will cause you to become insatiably hungry and have intense cravings, which will result in overeating or reaching for unhealthy snacks, and thus weight gain.

There is evidence that eating breakfast boosts performance and may cause gradual weight loss in the long run. However, there is a large number of people who have achieved weight loss success through intermittent fasting, and that often involves skipping breakfast. So, the jury is still out on whether breakfast really is the most important meal of the day and there seems to be no suggestion that skipping it is detrimental to your weight.

**Important note:** Every person is different and will react differently to the same experiences. Skipping breakfast may not have any impact on one person but may cause problems for the next. It is important to understand that individuality brings variability into the equation and to be aware of your personal needs.

### **Eating Often Increases Your Metabolism**

Everybody knows the claim that you should eat several smaller meals more frequently than only three larger meals less often. The theory behind this claim is that eating frequently stokes your metabolism and makes it more efficient at burning calories. The other side of this claim is that eating less often may, in fact, slow your metabolism down, leading to weight gain.

However, if eating infrequently did slow your metabolism down, why do so many people lose weight while practicing intermittent fasting? As with everything; individual variability comes into play. Your personal needs will dictate what kind of meal frequency works best for you but there is a trend that disproves this myth to be a universal truth.

### **Eating Often Aids Weight Loss**

If meal frequency doesn't necessarily boost or slow your metabolism down, why would it affect weight loss or weight

gain? This is another case of individual preference and your body's specific needs versus a claim being correct for everybody.

### **Fasting Triggers Your Body's Starvation Mode**

This is a common myth about fasting and is used as a frequent argument against it. The theory is that going without food puts you into starvation mode where your metabolism is slowed down to a crawl for supporting only essential functions, which makes burning fat difficult or nearly impossible.

While fasting for extended periods, and think days and not hours, it is possible that your metabolism may naturally slow down. This is a natural survival reaction to going days without food. However, short periods of fasting puts your body into ketosis, whereby fat is broken down into ketones for energy in the absence of glucose. This may, actually, temporarily increase your metabolism.

### **Eating More Often Keeps Hunger Away**

There is the belief that eating smaller meals more often helps decrease intense hunger and food cravings. This is another case in which individuality will affect the outcome. It's not true for everybody, but it may be for some. This variability is why some people find fasting for longer periods easier than others. Their body may just be more adept at functioning for longer periods without food and without triggering hunger. Others may find it harder to get into the swing of intermittent fasting because their bodies are the opposite.

### **Intermittent Fasting Leads to Overeating**

This is not entirely untrue, but it is also not true for everybody. Some individuals may find themselves compensating for their fasting period by overeating in quantity or calories during their

eating window. This isn't always the case, and by watching your intake and eating a healthy, balanced diet, you become accustomed to cycling between fasting and eating so that your body adapts. When your body adapts, your hunger pangs are likely to subside, and the urge to compensate should do the same.

### **Eating Frequently Promotes Good health**

Health, for the most part, comes from diet and lifestyle. If you are feeding your body the correct nutrition and living a generally healthy lifestyle, you are likely to be healthy. Short-term fasting does offer your body one possible health benefit over more frequent meals. Fasting for short periods triggers autophagy, which is the breaking down of old or faulty cells to be used for fuel and replacing them with healthy ones.

### **Intermittent Fasting is Unhealthy**

Intermittent fasting affects different people in different ways. It is important to always keep that in mind. However, fasting has been associated with a variety of health benefits. This alone kicks the idea that it is universally unhealthy to the curb. Whether intermittent fasting will be healthy for you, personally, can only be determined by a medical professional.

### **Intermittent Fasting: Frequently Asked Questions**

We've covered a lot of what you need to know, and want to know, about intermittent fasting. Many frequently asked questions have been answered but there are still a few to clear up.

### **Should You Do Anything Differently as a Woman?**

While both men and women may benefit from intermittent fasting, some fasting methods are more suitable for women. Men tend to be able to fast for longer periods more easily than women, who generally do better with shorter fasts. Women who fast regularly, or daily, may want to consider fasting on a 14:10 schedule than a 16:8 or higher.

Likewise, if you choose a fasting method that has fasting days and normal days, women tend to do better with the 5:2 Diet than other methods such as Alternate Day Fasting or the Eat Stop Eat method.

One of the reasons women do better with shorter fasting periods is that fasting affects their female hormones. The longer you fast, the more significantly your hormones are influenced. Therefore, fasting for a shorter time doesn't affect your hormones quite as much.

### **How Long and Frequently Should You Fast?**

The length and frequency of your fasting will depend on your personal goals as well as your current health and weight. If you are currently not in good health, fasting may not be a good idea until you have improved your health. Fasting has health benefits, but it's not a cure-all if you are not healthy. You may end up doing more harm than good if you take up an intermittent fasting program without getting the all-clear from your doctor.

Weight has a role to play in the frequency of intermittent fasting. If you are carrying more weight, you may be able to fast more frequently than someone who doesn't have the same amount of body fat. The length of your fasting period will depend on the type of fasting program you are undertaking and your gender. It is also important that your eating window gives you ample opportunity to consume enough calories for your

personal needs and goals. For example, if you are a light eater and can't manage to eat meals that will meet your needs in a short space of time, fasting on a 20:4 schedule isn't going to work for you.

### **What can you Drink While Fasting?**

Water is your best option when you want something to drink while fasting. However, you can enjoy pretty much any beverage that has no, or next to no, calories. Drinks that are sweetened with a non-nutritive artificial sweetener are a safe bet for calorie-free liquids. However, you should exercise caution, as it's been suggested that artificial sweeteners may negatively affect the microbes in your gut, and that may affect your metabolism. If you are looking for ideas of what to quench your thirst with, here are some suggestions:

- Water.
- Black coffee with artificial sweetener or no sugar.
- Tea without sugar or milk.
- Zero-calorie carbonated drinks and sugar-free sports drinks.

### **What About Cream or Milk in Coffee and Tea?**

When you are in a fasted state, your body enters ketosis, which is a fancy word for a fat-burning state. Introducing carbohydrates could take you out of a fasted state. Therefore, adding milk and cream could have a negative effect. The cream is a better option than milk, as it contains more fat. Adding healthy fats, such as coconut oil or a small amount of butter, to your coffee or tea may not kick you out of a fasted state as they are fats and not carbohydrates.

### **How do you Know When you are in a Fasted State?**

The only way to truly tell whether you are in ketosis or not is through a blood or breath ketosis meter. However, your body should enter ketosis and start burning fat after around 12 hours without food. This timeframe may vary slightly according to your metabolism. By around eight hours after your last meal, your food should have gone through the whole digestion and absorption process. After this time, your body will start using your stored glycogen for fuel. By 12 hours, those stores should be depleted and fat-burning should start.



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## FASTING PLANS

**W**ith so many different options available for intermittent fasting, it can be confusing to make a choice. We have discussed the reasons why using the Mediterranean diet for fasting and non-fasting days is the healthiest diet. The 5:2 intermittent fasting diet is the top suggested plan to follow for all women, so combining these two best options bring the greatest benefits for women of all ages.

The best way to succeed when starting is to have solid ideas of what to eat on fasting days, as well as the regular days. We have put together 10 daily meal plans for the non-fasting days, as well as 10 days of meal plans for fasting.

With 5:2, the golden rule to always keep in mind is that you can schedule your two fasting days per week on days that suit your schedule the best, as long as you never fast for two consecutive days. Always have at least one day of regular eating between fasting days.

You have the option of using the 5:2 Fast 800 diet by adding 300 calories per fasting day and, in this chapter, there is a list of ideas for guidance.

## 10 Non-Fasting Days (Mediterranean Diet)

### **Option 1**

#### **Breakfast**

- Omelet with vegetables (raw, steamed, or stir-fried) and olives.
- Tomatoes and onions.
- One piece of fruit of personal preference.

#### **Lunch**

- Cheese sandwich made with whole-grain bread.
- Medley of fresh vegetables.

#### **Dinner**

- Spinach lasagne (use a Mediterranean diet recipe).

### **Option 2**

#### **Breakfast**

- Yogurt with chopped nuts and sliced fruit.

#### **Lunch**

- Leftover spinach lasagne from the previous night's dinner.

#### **Dinner**

- Broiled fish (salmon, cod, hake, or pollack, etc.).

- Vegetables and brown rice.

### **Option 3**

#### **Breakfast**

- Oats (whole-grain) with maple syrup, cinnamon, and dates.
- Blackberries or raspberries as a topping, or any other low-sugar fruit.

#### **Lunch**

- Potato, yellow squash, onion, and zucchini stewed in a herb, tomato sauce.

#### **Dinner**

- 2 cups of vegetable greens such as spinach, collard greens, arugula, or kale with olives and tomatoes, served with olive oil.
- One portion of any available white fish, such as cod, tilapia, flounder, halibut, haddock, and hake, etc.
- Any leftovers from the stewed vegetables from lunchtime, or a piece of fruit.

### **Option 4**

#### **Breakfast**

- Whole-wheat toast.
- Avocado mashed and spread on toast.

#### **Lunch**

- Grilled chicken or salmon skewers.
- Greek salad.

### **Dinner**

- Sautéed vegetable greens.
- Tilapia or other white fish served with lemon.

### **Option 5**

#### **Breakfast**

- Scrambled egg with onion and bell peppers.

#### **Lunch**

- Pita with grilled chicken filling.
- Tomato and cucumber salad.

#### **Dinner**

- Oven-baked white fish.
- Medley of roasted vegetables.

### **Option 6**

#### **Breakfast**

- Greek yogurt with oats and sliced or chopped strawberries.

#### **Lunch**

- Sandwich (whole-grain).

- Raw vegetables or a vegetable salad.

### **Dinner**

- Tuna salad with an olive oil dressing.
- One piece of fruit as per personal preference.

### **Option 7**

#### **Breakfast**

- Oats with cranberries, raisins, chopped dates, or prunes.

#### **Lunch**

- Tuna salad (the leftovers from dinner or make fresh).

#### **Dinner**

- Greek salad with feta cheese and olives.

### **Option 8**

#### **Breakfast**

- Frittata with tomatoes and zucchini.

#### **Lunch**

- A gyro made with roasted chickpeas.

#### **Dinner**

- Polenta with a red pepper ragout.
- Top with roasted mushrooms and roasted eggplant.

## **Option 9**

### **Breakfast**

- Whole-wheat toast.
- 1 egg, pan-fried.
- Green or red tomatoes, grilled.

### **Lunch**

- 2 cups salad greens, mixed with a dressing of vinegar and olive oil.
- Top with olives and cherry tomatoes.
- Hummus, about 2 tablespoons.
- 1 pita bread, whole grain.

### **Dinner**

- Pizza with a whole-grain base and tomato sauce.
- Top with low-fat cheese and grilled vegetables.

## **Option 10**

### **Breakfast**

- Whole-wheat toast, 2 slices with a soft cheese such as goat cheese, ricotta, or queso fresco.
- For sweetness, add figs or blueberries.

### **Lunch**

- 1 portion of roast chicken.
- Mixed salad greens with cucumber and cherry tomatoes.

## **Dinner**

- 1 cup of couscous, whole-grain.
- Top with roasted vegetables such as tomato, zucchini, carrots, sweet potato, eggplant, and carrots.

## **10 Fasting Day Plans (500 Calories)**

Please note that the calorie values with the fast day plans will be an estimate and can vary depending on what products and ingredients are used to make the meals.

On fasting days, you have two options. You can opt for 3 small meals, or you can have 2 bigger meals. The meal plans below include 5 menus for 2 meals per day and 5 menus for 3 meals per day.

### **Fast Plan 1 (Total Calories 527) - 3 Meals per Day**

#### **Breakfast**

- 1 slice toast, whole-wheat.
- 4 egg whites scrambled.

#### **Lunch**

- $\frac{1}{4}$  avocado mashed or chopped.
- 3 oz canned and water-packed white tuna.
- 2 Romaine lettuce leaves to use as wraps.

## **Dinner**

- 1/2 sweet potato, baked.
- 3 oz grilled chicken breast, lean.

## **Fast Plan 2 (Total calories 500) - 3 Meals per Day**

### **Breakfast**

- 1/2 cup prepared oatmeal, sprinkled with cinnamon.
- 1/2 cup blueberries.

### **Lunch**

- 1/2 cup asparagus, steamed.
- 4 oz chicken, grilled.

### **Dinner**

- 1 cup roasted broccoli.
- 4 oz of catfish, baked.

### **Snack:**

- A few celery sticks with 2 Tbsp hummus.

## **Fast Plan 3 (Total Calories 529) - 3 Meals per Day**

### **Breakfast**

- 1 slice Swiss cheese, non-fat.
- 3 egg whites, scrambled.
- 1/2 cup green peppers.



## **Lunch**

- 2 Romaine lettuce leaves to use as wraps.
- ¼ avocado, chopped finely.
- 3 oz lean chicken breast, grilled.

## **Dinner**

- 3 oz of lean steak, broiled.
- 1 cup cauliflower.

## **Fast Plan 4 (Total Calories 493) - 2 Meals per Day**

### **Breakfast**

- 1 packet of muesli Belvita Breakfast Biscuits.

### **Dinner**

- Roasted vegetables with balsamic glaze: ½ aubergine, ½ red pepper, ½ courgette, and ½ butternut squash.  
Drizzled with 1 Tbsp balsamic vinegar and a squeeze of lemon.

### **Snack**

- 1 Sugar-free jello pot or serving.

## **Fast Plan 5 (Total calories 482) - 2 Meals per Day**

### **Breakfast**

- 1 banana and 3.5 oz low-fat yogurt sprinkled with cinnamon.

## **Dinner**

- 1 cup of cooked and seasoned spinach.
- 4.4 oz of grilled turkey breast steak.

## **Snack**

- 0.5 oz popcorn.

## **Fast Plan 6 Vegetarian (Total Calories 521) - 3 Meals per Day**

### **Breakfast**

- 1 cup raspberries.
- 3 slices Swiss cheese, non-fat.

### **Lunch**

- 1 slice of whole-wheat bread, toasted.
- 4 egg whites, scrambled.

### **Dinner**

- 1 ½ cups broccoli.
- ¼ block baked firm tofu, seasoned with spices and herbs of own preference.

## **Fast Plan 7 (Total Calories 502) - 2 Meals per Day**

### **Breakfast**

- 1.8 oz nuts and fruit muesli.

## **Dinner**

- 3.5 oz steamed curly kale with black pepper.
- 3.5 oz salmon fillet.
- 3 tsp of green pesto.

## **Snack**

- 2 oz cherries, stoned

## **Fast Plan 8 (Total Calories 489) - 2 Meals per Day**

### **Breakfast**

- A bowl of mixed berries: 3.5 oz raspberries, 3.5 oz strawberries, and 3.5 oz blueberries.

### **Dinner**

- Chargrilled vegetable couscous with Harissa chicken: 4.5 oz chicken breast, 1 Tbsp harissa paste, and 3.5 oz vegetable couscous.

### **Snack**

- 10 pistachios.

## **Fast Plan 9 (Total Calories 525) - 2 Meals per Day**

### **Breakfast**

- 1.4 oz oats porridge with cinnamon.

### **Dinner**

- Beetroot and Feta cheese salad: 1.7 oz beetroot, 2 oz spinach, and 1 oz feta cheese, served with a squeeze of lemon.

### **Snack**

- 1 apple sliced and served with 1 Tbsp almond butter.

## **Fast Plan 10 Vegan (Total Calories 549) - 3 Meals**

### **Breakfast**

- ½ cup raspberries, ¼ block firm tofu, scrambled, and ½ cup green pepper.

### **Lunch**

- 2 Romaine lettuce leaves for wraps.
- ¼ avocado mixed with ½ cup chickpeas, canned.

### **Dinner**

- ½ cup quinoa.
- ½ cup peppers, red.
- ½ cup broccoli.

## **Suggestions to Add 300 Calories on Fast Days**

These are simple and easy options for taking the basic 500 calories per day for fasting days up to the 800 calories per fasting day option. Each of the following suggested snacks rounds off to approximately 300 calories each.

1. 3 Ryvita, tomato soup, and a handful of seeds.
2. 2 hard-boiled eggs,  $\frac{1}{4}$  avocado, and 1 slice of bread (rye).
3. Pesto chicken: 6 oz of chicken (breast), olive oil, 1 Tbsp pine nuts, and salt and pepper.
4. 7 oz yogurt (full fat), plus 1 cup of blueberries.
5. Whey protein, 1 scoop plus 15 mixed nuts of your choice.
6. Turkey sandwich (half): 1 slice of whole-grain bread, tomato, turkey slices, cucumber, and avocado slices.
7. Beetroot salad with feta cheese: Cooked beetroot (9.5 oz), feta cheese (.7 oz), and 10 pumpkin seeds.
8. Pork with mustard and honey: Pork fillet 6.5 oz, 1 tsp each mustard and honey, olive oil, and seasoning.
9. 1.8 oz oats porridge, water, and 1 Tbsp nut butter.
10. Tandoori chicken: 3 oz chicken (breast meat), 1 tsp curry powder, 1 tsp yogurt, salt and pepper, and olive oil.
11. Tofu and edamame salad: 2.8 oz tofu, 2.8 oz edamame, fresh coriander, lettuce,  $\frac{1}{2}$  oz cucumber, fresh mint, a pinch of sesame seeds a dash of sesame oil, salt and pepper, a dash of soy sauce, and lime juice.
12. Soaked mackerel and pickled ginger: 3 oz of smoked mackerel, a tsp of sesame seeds, and grated pickled ginger.
13. Butternut squash and halloumi salad: 1.8 oz halloumi, sliced red onion, a Tbsp of pumpkin seeds, 5.3 oz of butternut cooked, 1 cup of spinach or more, and a dash of lemon juice and olive oil.
14. 1.78 oz dark chocolate.

## AFTERWORD

Now you know it all. Intermittent fasting is healthy. It's sustainable. It works. You now know how to rejuvenate your health, feel younger, and lose weight.

Intermittent fasting takes some work and some getting used to. You have to retrain your body to become a fat-burning machine, and that isn't always going to be a walk in the park. The good news is that once you get a handle on it and your body adapts, you'll wonder why you didn't try it ages ago.

Fasting is an age-old practice that people have been using for its benefits before modern science and medicine could provide proof of those benefits. Our ancestors knew what you now know, and it's your turn to continue the legacy.

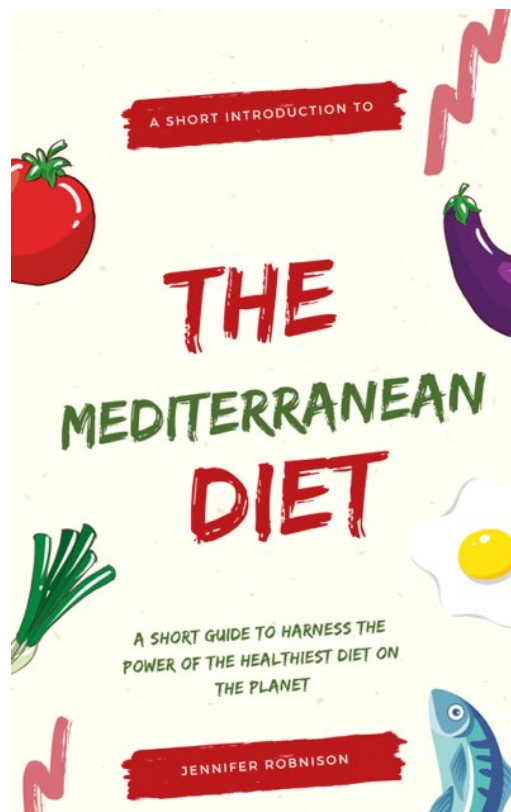
They say that knowledge is power, and you now have that knowledge. We've taught you about intermittent fasting and equipped you with the tools to get started on your journey to better health and happiness. You can now decide what fasting method you want to undertake and you can customize your intermittent fasting to suit your needs. We've also provided you with the healthiest way of eating in the world that will provide you with optimal nutrition which, when combined with fasting, will offer you all the benefits of a truly healthy and sustainable lifestyle.

The only question left to ask yourself is this:

“What am I waiting for?”

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## A MESSAGE FROM THE AUTHOR

First of all, thank you for reading this book. I know you could have picked any number of books to read, but you picked this book and for that I am extremely grateful.

I hope that it added at value and quality to your life.

If you enjoyed this book and found benefit in reading this, I'd like to hear from you and hope that you could take some time to post a review on the site where you have purchased it. Your feedback and support will help me to greatly improve my writing craft for future projects and make this book even better.

Thank you.

Jennifer Robinson

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