

INTERMITTENT FASTING IS IT GOOD FOR YOU -OR NOT



Lasting weight loss, protection from heart disease, diabetes and cancer. Improved brain health, and enhanced physical fitness. It seems like as if every week, researchers find a new benefit associated with intermittent fasting: schedules for eating that incorporate regular periods of no food consumption or low food consumption. By eating normally a few days a week, and then eating much less on the other days, an individual may be able to shift his or her body's cellular and metabolic processes in a way that will promote optimal health. The experts say, that while many of the blanks still need to be filled in, there is no longer a doubt of the positive health effects of intermittent fasting.



There continues to be very good evidence that intermittent fasting is producing some weight-loss benefits, and we now have some evidence that these diets can also reduce inflammation. These diets can reduce blood pressure and resting heart rate, and they also seem to have some beneficial effects on the cardiovascular system, says Benjamin Horne, the director of cardiovascular and genetic epidemiology at Utah's nonprofit Intermountain Healthcare system, who has published some research on the subject. Intermittent fasting is something that is definitely moving into practice in the medical field, and it is a reasonable approach for individuals who do not like daily restriction of their calories.



The bulk of the early research on fasting focused on weight loss. Studies that were comparing intermittent fasting (also is known as intermittent energy restriction) with calorie-cutting diets have now found that people lose more weight on a fasting plan. They also seem to actually like the diet better: intermittent fasters tend to drop out of the dietary studies at a much lower rate than the calorie cutters. Intermittent fasting has become a good option for weight loss for overweight and people who are obese, says Michelle Harvie, who is a research dietitian with the Prevent Breast Cancer unit at the Manchester Breast Centre in the U.K. Harvie has co-authored studies on intermittent fasting, also her research has repeatedly shown that it outperforms the traditional diets involving weight loss, improvement in insulin resistance and reduction of body fat. Also, she found some evidence that intermittent fasting may outdo the traditional weight loss plans in lowering the risk for breast cancer. Most of Harvie's research has examined 5:2 fasting plans—restricting the calorie intake for two days a week, and allowing the other

five day for normal eating. However, she says there is also promising research on the diets that impose fasting every other day, also on time-restricted fasting, in which the daily food consumption is being restricted to a six-or eight-hour window.



However none of these have been studied head-to-head, but they all do improve health, says Mr Mark Mattson, chief of the Laboratory of Neurosciences at the National Institute on Aging, also a professor of neuroscience at the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine. Mr Mattson has in the past published multiple studies on intermittent fasting. There is evidence that these diets bolster stress resistance, also combat inflammation at a cellular level, says Mr Mattson. Individuals undergo a metabolic switch in which the liver's energy stores are depleted, so the body's cells will start using fat and ketones for energy, he says. The switch is a form of mild challenge to the human body, being compare to exercise; just

as lifting weights or running stresses the body in many beneficial ways, the stress being imposed by fasting appears to induce some similarly beneficial adaptations. Whether you're fasting or you're talking about physical activity, these cycles of challenge, recovery, challenge, recovery seem to have optimized both function, also durability of most cell sites, says Mark Mattson. Fasting will also sense evolutionarily. While, all-the-time access to food is a relatively new phenomenon in our human history. Back when sustenance was much harder to come by, natural selection would have favored people whose bodies and brains functioned well in a food-deprived state, says Mattson.



However, the experts acknowledge there are still unknowns. Almost all the human research to date has been in obese adults or overweight. We really don't know of its benefits in normal-weight individuals, as it has not yet been studied, says Harvie. It is also not yet clear if it is any long-term risks. How should one try it? Mattson says the 5:2 plan has the most data backing it up. Two days a week (either broken up or consecutive), consume just 500 calories daily of protein or fat foods like fish, eggs and nuts. One day's meal plan could be for breakfast two scrambled eggs (180 calories), for a

snack, a quarter cup of almonds (200 calories) and for dinner a four-ounce cod fillet (100 calories). However, you like, you can divvy up the calories. But better to have very little or no carbohydrates, says Mattson. While you'll want to only eat healthy foods the rest of the week, you won't have to avoid carbs or count calories. Mattson says you can expect for the first few weeks to feel hungry. But by the end of month 1, we have found, almost all has adapted and there were not any symptoms. It may eventually turn out that longer periods of fasting-say, going with-out any food at all for 24 hours could be beneficial even more. But we need more human data. I suggest that people talk to their physician first, Horne stresses, the intermittent fasting is not my friends a silver bullet: There is no amount of fasting or exercise that can overcome an unhealthy lifestyle or a bad diet.



FOOD FOR THOUGHT, MAYBE

Another way for us to guard against overeating healthy-but-rich foods is for us to slow down at the dinner table.

A lot of us are eating way too fast, says Mira Ilic, a clinical dietitian at the Cleveland Clinic. It takes a minimum of 20 minutes for our brain to pick up on satiety, the fullness of the stomach, and you will miss the cue of being full if you are eating too quickly.

May you be always in good health. Humbly your Paul Earl

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