

An Introduction to Fasting

By Seth Bailin

Historically, fasting has been done 1) out of necessity when food is scarce, and 2) for spiritual purposes of divine communion. In recent history, the focus has shifted to the physical benefits of fasting, partly because modern humans experience so many diseases of the body. Whatever the reason you choose to fast, know that it's a multidimensional undertaking that is going to have wide ranging positive effects on your physicality, your mind, emotions, and spirit (if you allow it).

This is not medical advice. This is a collection of notes to myself to aid in my growth and understanding of fasting and its role in the detoxification of the body.

Introduction

Fasting is defined as abstaining from eating food. You already fast whether you know it or not - every time you sleep you are fasting. That's why the first meal after you wake up is called break-fast.

So the question is not "do you fast?" but rather "how long do you fast?"

Fasting helps the digestive system (and other bodily systems) rest, recover, and cleanse after eating. The digestive system, which is about 30 feet long in most adult humans, is one of the biggest users of nerve energy in the body. Constantly filling your system with excess food taxes the body's energy reserves and eventuates in disease.

A fasted digestive system not only tells your body to burn fat for energy, it increases the removal of dead cells and growth of new ones in a recycling process called Autophagy, reducing inflammation and providing renewed energy. A fasted system sends signals to the brain to be more alert, an evolutionary trait we developed as hunter gathers.

Fasting is not starvation, it is the conscious abstinence from food-based energy sources. Other physical and spiritual energies are always available, and they become our food during a fast. Tap onto your bountiful reserves. Drink in the sun. Feast on fresh air. Imbue your body with prana.

Fasting has become a central piece of public health policy in Russia, where insurance covers medically-supervised long fasts (up to 40 days).

On Lake Bikal in Goryachinsk, doctors at the Center for Fasting have successfully treated thousands of patients with supervised fasting. There is a Fasting Treatment Unit at the Moscow Psychiatric Institute, where similar work is being done. Much of the Russian science on fasting is not known by doctors around the world because many studies have not been translated to other languages.

In India there is an entire tradition of the renunciation of food. Yogi Prahlad Jani claims to have not eaten for 70 years. Medical authorities with the Indian Defense Institute (DIPAS) monitored and studied him for 10 days in 2003 and again for 15 days in 2010, shocking the scientists and doctors who concluded: the Yogi did not consume anything nor pass stool or urine for those days. Yogi Prahlad Jani, along with many other breatharians and ascetics, show us what is possible, challenging the official narrative that blanketly states not eating has harmful effects.

****Warning**** Do not attempt long term fasting without the proper experience and help of a highly trained professional. Always transition slowly toward your fasting goals.

Many types of fasting are practiced for their physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual health benefits. This article will explore the main pillars of: intermittent fasting, 24-48 hour fasts, extended fasts, water fasting, dry fasting, solid food vacations*, and Ayurvedic fasting*. (These last two are not technically pure fasts).

Intermittent Fasting

A popular type of fasting that has entered the mainstream is Time Restricted Eating, aka Intermittent Fasting (IF). IF is the practice of eating within a specific time of the day (for example between noon and 8pm) and not eating anything outside that window. The eating window is to be determined by each individual based on their lifestyle. For example:

12/12 split: 12 hours of eating, 12 hours of fasting per day.

Start here if the concept of fasting is new to you or if you currently eat at all times of the day. This will be an easy challenge for many, but will start to train ones mind to turn on and off the switch for ingestion.

16/8 split: 8 hours of eating, 16 hours of fasting per day. For example, eat between 9am-5pm or 1-9pm daily.

Move the eating window ahead or behind if needed - say on a special occasion you want to partake in shared food after your cutoff, don't stress, enjoy the food and then push back your first meal the following day to maintain a daily 16 hour fast. 16/8 is a highly common practice. It is meant to be practiced daily. It has proven to be beneficial and sustainable.

22/2 split AKA One Meal a Day (OMAD) AKA the Warrior Diet: Fast for 22-23 hours and eat a big meal within a 1-2 hour time span.

This plan is for highly disciplined individuals who know how to consume the proper nutrition and energy production needs for their body. If the meal is nourishing, this practice will have great health results. Benefits include more intense detoxification and strengthened will power.

1-2 day fasts

1-2 day fasts are a great way to give your digestion a break, to expedite the cleansing process of a cold or flu, to develop mental clarity and strength, and to feel and process strong emotions.

Only you will know what time frame is right for you. Drink water when hungry. Don't overeat when breaking these fasts.

24-hour water fast: Stop eating at a certain time one day, and then resume eating at the same time the next day. You can look at it like skipping 2 meals in a row. This can be done once a week or once a month.

36-48 hour water fast. Choose one day where the main activity is fasting; you will still eat the day before and after. This can be done once a month or once a season.

Stop eating one night (ex. Sunday), let the entire next day go by drinking only water (Monday), and resume eating at your normal time the day after that (Tuesday). Waiting til the evening to eat can push your fast to 48 hrs.

No juice because you want to restrict calorie intake to 0. While coffee and tea (even herbal) are non-caloric and therefore may be consumed during a fast, they are stimulating and are not recommended. Make this a relaxing day, with few mental and physical stresses.

You must ease into and ease out of this fast as it is a little more extreme. Eat fresh fruit and vegetables the day before the fast and avoid overly processed protein, carbs, or fats, and stimulants like coffee. Drink lots of pure water the day of the fast. The day after, break your fast with fresh, hydrating fruit like watermelon, grapes, or oranges, and do not over-eat to compensate for a day without food, otherwise you will go right back to overburdening your digestive system.

Extended fasting (longer than 48 hrs)

Only those experienced in fasting of a lesser degree should go longer than 1-2 days. Prolonged fasts should only be practiced under the guidance of a professional.

Only you will know how long to fast. Once you decide that, set aside a special time and make preparations. It is not advised to work, exercise, or drive during extended fasts as energy levels will be low.

The longer the fast, the more one must prepare physically, mentally, and emotionally in the days leading up to it. To avoid serious detox symptoms and withdrawal, transitional periods are done before and after fasts longer than one day. Ways to design your transitional period are endless, but a general rule is to use more days transitioning on either side than days fasting.

An example of a transitional period for an extended fast is for the two weeks leading up to it cut out all animal products, oils and fats, and stimulants like caffeine, alcohol, and smoke. Over the two weeks, ramp down the density of your foods from meats to starches, to cooked veggies, to more raw fruit and tender leafy greens, to juice, before cutting off all food for the fast. Break your fast with ripe, fresh, hydrating fruit, while easing back into more dense food over the course of days. Give it time before re-engaging in intense activity. This will give your body the most gentle and cleansing transition. Going into or out of an extended fast abruptly can lead to more suffering.

Mental and emotional preparation is also key, as during the fast you won't be able to use the pleasure of eating to satisfy your cravings, silence heightened emotions, or redirect your thoughts. Let the people around you know your goals and ask for their support. Write down your goals for the fast in a journal. Read literature on fasting to more fully understand what will be taking place. Anticipate discomfort as you will be left to contend with your inner self.

During the fast, being in a calm environment with supportive people helps tremendously. Do not work or exercise during this time as you will have bouts of low energy. Open up to yourself and to your body, and let all messages from the universe come through. Record your insights in a journal so you can revisit those insights later. Retreating into nature is one of the most primal places to be during a fast, and it is there where the deepest spiritual connections can happen.

2-3 day fast

Within 2-3 days, the body takes a good amount of energy that is usually allotted for digestion, and uses it for detoxification and healing. Hormonal changes occur as the body starts adapting to this new state. The first and second days are usually the most uncomfortable as the body is still in glycolysis (carb-burning) mode and it is not being fed. Low energy is to be expected.

3+ day fasts

Around the third day of fasting, most bodies will have fully shifted over to a different energy-burning process called ketosis. This is when the body breaks down fat reserves and converts it into energy. Toxins stored within the fat and various organs are also broken down and removed from the body.

Ketosis resembles the physical effect of deep sleep, where the body is able to use its latent, unused energy to heal and detoxify the body. It is common to feel lousy fasting, as the body is being forced into ketosis and is detoxing at the same time. Practitioners report more energy and clarity after the second or third day.

10+ day fasts

The body begins to clean out deeper stores of toxins like drugs we may have taken at any point in our lives. Practitioners report feeling their denser organs like teeth and bones detoxing and repairing during longer fasts. Mental, emotional, and spiritual awareness is heightened during longer fasts.

Variations

Dry fasting is the intake of nothing into the body. Dry fasting is a highly powerful detox and healing technique used by some, but is very dangerous if the body is already in a state of dehydration (which most people are). Completely restricting food and water forces the body to enter a highly adapted state that offers cellular renewal at the deepest level. All non-essential material in the body is recycled to sustain the essentials, or eliminated. Dry fasting is not recommended, as it may result in kidney damage.

The ancient Indian tradition of Ayurveda takes health into consideration holistically, so they prescribe abstaining from certain foods before abstaining from food altogether. Setting a goal to remove any ingestible that is deleterious to health for a certain length of time is a good practice that builds discipline and focus while giving the body a break from that input. Can you do a sugar fast? What about fasting from refined wheat or dairy products? How long can you go without alcohol?

Alongside the gradual cleaning of your body's environment, along with proper and simple food combining, fasting is to be done. This practice supports this idea that it's good to take it slow when making dietary changes. "Don't push the river" as they say. It's okay to take years to transition to a new type of eating goal.

The Solid Food Vacation (AKA juice feast), while not technically a fast, is a great tool for beginners and seasoned practitioners alike. Juices should be simple combinations of fruits and vegetables, with emphasis on the fruits as they have the most sugar to sustain your energy throughout the day. I learned through experience to drink enough each day: usually around a gallon divided out over 4 "meals," drinking a quart per meal. 30+ day solid food vacations have been shown to drastically reset the body, reversing disease symptoms like type 2 diabetes, obesity, asthma, arthritis, and skin conditions.

Conclusion

Fasting not only alleviates the burden on your digestive system, allowing for the natural process of healing to take place, but it trains you mentally to turn on and off the switch for

consuming food. From a psychological perspective, fasting has great implications for overcoming other addiction issues and strengthening willpower in general.

Fasting helps develop awareness, sharpens discipline, supports the body's innate intelligence, and allows one to take personal ownership in the prevention and reversal of disease.

Understanding what changes to expect before going into a fast is important. Entering the journey with confidence and full awareness is important as to not create nervousness and fear of the unknown or fear of lack. Read and learn as much as possible from other people before trying it out.

Resources

The Science of Fasting (documentary)

The Transformational Power of Fasting by Stephen Harrod Buhner

The Mucusless Diet Healing System: a Scientific Method of Eating Your Way to Health by Arnold Ehret

Rational Fasting by Arnold Ehret

The Life Science Course Lessons 45 and 46 on Fasting, by TC Fry

Fasting Can Save Your Life by Herbert Shelton

Interviews on YouTube with researchers such as Dr. Rhonda Patrick, Dr. Satchin Panda, and Dr. Alan Goldhamer

and many others. Seek out additional resources to empower yourself with knowledge of this ancient, intrinsic healing modality.

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Listen to my interview with Brother Air to hear his experiences doing a 29 day dry fast and a 371 day solid food vacation on episode 3 of the Radical Health podcast.