



GET FIT,
LIVE FIT,
REVERSE OBESITY.

The most effective ways to do Intermittent fasting



SEBASTIAN PAUL



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Chapter 01

An Introduction to Intermittent fasting.

Some people say intermittent fasting is “like magic.” But going through all the various intermittent fasting schedules and therefore the mountains of research on fasting may be a major undertaking. In this eBook, I’ve tried to explain it all —so you can decide whether intermittent fasting is for you or not.



01

Maybe you’ve had this experience. All of a sudden a person you know becomes evangelical about intermittent fasting (IF), telling you: “It’s so easy. I just don’t eat until 2 pm.”

Your friend has never felt this good. They’re buzzing with energy and focus, and that they look incredible. This fasting thing? It’s working for them. You think, ‘Hm, maybe I should give this a try?’

And almost as soon as you’ve had that thought, another friend comes in conjunction with their IF experience.

Ugh, this stupid IF diet,” the other friend says. “I’ve never been this hungry ever.”

That friend seems drained, stressed, angry—like a mad man. So maybe... IF isn’t for you, after all?

Such conversations can lead any thinking person to wonder:

Does IF even work?

And what, technically, is that if anyway?

Who should try IF?

Who shouldn't?

What are the pros and cons?

Of the varied different IF schedules—16:8, 20:4, 5:2, among others—
which one works the best?

In this eBook, we've answered the very best intermittent fasting questions.

You'll find everything you'd wish to choose whether IF could also be an honest fit yourself and, if so, how to use IF for best results. Read it so as. Or start with what attracts your interest first. It's all good.

Chapter 02

Basics of Intermittent fasting

What exactly does “intermittent fasting” mean? And why are so many people doing it? Let’s start with the fundamentals, including the key must-know terms, a quick look at the most popular intermittent fasting schedules, and some surprising truths about intermittent fasting you won’t hear elsewhere.



02

Intermittent fasting means you eat for a time period, and you don't eat for a time period. But exactly when and the way you eat or don't eat)varies from one fasting schedule to a different one.

I will define intermittent fasting more deeply than other available sources. In this eBook, we've included intermittent energy restrictions such as the 5:2 diet, time-restricted feeding such as the 16:8 and 20:4 diets, and fasting-mimicking diets under the intermittent fasting umbrella.

Intermittent fasting offers many benefits. But it doesn't benefit everyone equally.

Definition of intermittent fasting?

In some ways, the concept of intermittent fasting (IF) is so simple it seems silly to read a multi-chapter eBook about this subject.

“Fasting” is simply a magniloquent word for “not eating.”

“Intermittent” means “sometimes,” “occasionally,” or “now and again.”

When you combine these two into a phrase, you’re basically saying: Sometimes you fast. Other times you eat.

Except, of course, IF may be a bit more complex than that.

- When should you eat?
- And how much?
- And how long should you fast?
- How do you stay consistent?

We’ll get to those questions a little later within this eBook. For now, we’d wish to offer little basic:

- What IF is and isn’t
- The history of intermittent fasting
- What many people won’t tell you about IF

For our better understanding and ease of use, I like to put a vocabulary cheat sheet.

- IF: Intermittent fasting: Occasionally eating nothing
- IER: Intermittent energy restriction: Eating a lot less (but not zero) on some days, and normally on other days
- FMD: Fasting mimicking diets: Eating roughly half as much, as usual, one week of the month
- ADF: Alternate-day fasting: Alternating days of eating with fasting or eating much less
- TRF: Time-restricted feeding: Eating only within a pre-specified period of time, or an “eating window”
- CR: Caloric restriction: Consuming less energy (calories) than you expend

What is Intermittent fasting?

Intermittent fasting (IF) is that the name some nutrition experts give to the practice of occasionally practicing extended periods either eating nothing or less than usual.

And there are four main ways to try it.

Classic IF: Occasionally, you eat nothing. For example, on an Alternate Day Fast, you'd fast every other day. Other IF schedules recommend fasting only one or two days a week—or a few (or more days) a month.

Intermittent energy restriction: Also called “partial fasting,” you consume less, but not zero. For example, on the 5:2 plan, you'd eat normally five days every week and restrict calories two days every week.

Time-restricted feeding: You confine your eating to a pre-specified period of time, or an “eating window.” for instance, on the 16:8 plan, you consume food 8 hours each day, fasting for the other 16 hours. On the 20:4 plan, you only eat for 4 hours of the day. Good quaint meal skipping also falls into this sort of fasting.

Fasting mimicking diets: For an entire week, you eat roughly half as much as usual. Then for 3-4 weeks, you eat normally, continually repeating the cycle.

Technically, “fasting” is defined as going without food for a minimum of 8 hours. Some of the fasting methods above include 8 hours fasts (or longer)—and some don't.

That said, in this eBook, I've included all of these options under the IF umbrella.

For simplicity, unless specifically stated, we'll use the term IF to encompass all of those eating styles.

Beginning of Intermittent fasting

Sometimes intentionally and other times not, humans have gone without food since the start of our time on this planet.

Throughout the world, many tribes have experienced some form of IF, even to this day. They eat a lot when food is plentiful, and much less or nothing at all when food is scarce. Even in industrialized countries, many of us still go hungry for economic reasons.

Aside from times of scarcity, humans have also fasted on purpose: Ancient Greeks like Plato and Pythagoras sometimes went without food because they believed it boosted health and mental performance.

Muslims fast from dawn to sunset during Ramadan. Jews roll in the hay on Yom Kippur to catch up on their sins. Christians, too, are known to try a partial fast during the 40 days of Lent by going without a variety of foods.

Gandhi went on hunger strikes 17 different times to protest discrimination by the British government.

It wasn't until the 1900s, though, that researchers started experimenting with what, how much, and the way often they fed their lab rats. Some lucky rodents served as the controls and had access to food 24/7. Others were much less fortunate. Researchers put them on a strict diet—the kind of diet that the majority of humans would struggle to take care of.

--The result: the somewhat starved rodents lived longer.

Over the years, within the name of science, lab rats and mice have eaten just one occasion each day, every other day, or only during certain times of the day. These periodic fasts make the rodents healthier: protecting their brains, preventing cancer, and slowing the aging process.

To help humans reap an equivalent benefit, medical professionals began experimenting with a good range of fasting techniques to market health, longevity, and weight loss. Those approaches were pretty dangerous.

Eventually, the scientific community found out that the majority of humans can't persist with a diet that recommends they stop eating for weeks. So, they came up with gentler, more sustainable approaches, like fasting one or two days every week.

Recent research shows that, when done properly, IF might help:

- Regulate blood glucose
- Control blood lipids such as cholesterol
- Reduce the risk of heart disease, cancer, and other diseases
- Manage body weight

3 things you don't usually hear about intermittent fasting

IF offers tons of benefits—but there are some gray areas. Based on our personal experimentation with many IF schedules, the experiences of our clients, and therefore the latest research, we know:

- A little fasting goes a long way.

We've found that IF isn't necessarily faster or better than conventional calorie restriction. More surprising, we've found that little fasting (one day a week) may offer more benefits than tons of fasting (two or more days a week).

In fact, I have personally, pushed too far with fasting, they got less healthy.

- You don't have to follow a carefully structured plan.

Precise timing, amounts, schedules... these don't matter," or following the essential concepts that make fasting and other practices work.

This is very true if you're at a lower nutritional level (which is most people).

- There's no single best method.

People's experiences with IF can vary widely, because of:
physiological differences like age, sex, or health
psychological differences like how willing people are to be uncomfortable immediately so as to profit within the future
environmental differences like social support, or living in a food-focused culture

Don't get sucked in and begin doing IF randomly or wildly, hoping for Cinderella-style life transformation.

Instead, test claims, check out the research, understand the essential mechanisms, and adopt a careful, evidence-based approach.

Keep reading and we'll show you how in the next chapters.



**Instead
of medicine
fast for a day .**

Chapter 03

How Intermittent fasting works

The science behind intermittent fasting, this chapter breaks down what happens in your body (and when) during the fasting process. We'll also cover intermittent fasting's impact on metabolism and appetite, and what research says overall about whether intermittent fasting is healthy or not.

03

Knowing the science of fasting is beneficial. Once you understand how intermittent fasting works, you'll be ready to weigh the pros and cons for yourself.

"Fasted" may be a metabolic state that the body enters after 8-12 hours without food. It's defined by the shift in nutrient use from "external" to "internal" sources. This shift is what creates the biochemical changes—and potential benefits—of fasting. Intermittent fasting is often healthy for a few people. But there's a sweet spot. Fasting too intensely, and therefore the benefits fade.



It all sounds a bit magical.

According to intermittent fasting (IF) proponents, people can experience a variety of health benefits just by doing one simple thing: changing the way they eat.

For anyone who's struggled to consistently stick with a strict scheduled diet, not worrying about what to eat—or even the way to eat—can certainly sound heavenly.

Still, if you're getting to go an extended time without food, you kind of want to understand that your efforts can pay off.

Does IF actually work?

If so, why?

And for whom?

In this chapter, I'll answer to those questions.

We'll dive into the science of everything in IF, will discuss about:

- How IF works
- Why fasting could be healthier than eating more frequently, a minimum of for a few people
- What fasting does and doesn't do to your metabolism.
- Why fasting might not cause you to as hungry as you think.

How does intermittent fasting work?

Let's take a look at what happens in the body when you go more than 8 hours of fasting.

We'll start with the last meal consumed.

- 0 hours: last meal.
- 0-6 hours: As your body digests and absorbs your meal, hormones, and neuropeptides (chemical signals in the brain) are released, helping to move nutrients into cells and tell you, "Hey there, you've eaten enough. Go ahead and put your plate in the dishwasher and move on to other activities."

- 6-8 hours: Most if not all of your meal has been digested. Now you're in what's called the post-absorptive state. Nutrients from the meal are available for your cells to use for energy, repair, or other jobs.
- 8-12 hours: Your body has largely cleared and used all the nutrients from your last meal. This shift in energy and nutrient use from "outside sources" (a meal) to "inside sources" (what's stored in your body) creates the biochemical changes that define the fasted state.
- 12-48 hours: Your liver releases ketone bodies as well as stored glycogen, and your liver and kidneys start making glycerol and free fatty acids. These are all substances your body can use as fuel.
- 48-72 hours: If you're in a fasted state longer than a couple of days, your body starts to slow or change key physiological processes in order to keep you alive.
- 72+ hours: By about two to three days into a fast, you're almost completely dependent on fatty acids released from your adipose (fat) tissue for fuel. In long-term starvation conditions, this helps spare your more valuable stash of protein, which makes up most important body structures, such as your internal organs.

Is intermittent fasting healthy?

The benefits of fasting largely occur from calorie restriction. When you fast, you obviously eat less (or nothing).

Fasting also stimulates many cellular and molecular mechanisms that our bodies use to thrive in conditions of food scarcity. Blood sugar, insulin, resting pulse, and vital sign all decrease—while insulin sensitivity and cell clean out (called autophagy) improves. Those are all positive signs.

Intermittent fasting and women

While intermittent fasting seems to benefit males, it can have a negative effect on hormones and metabolism in some females. Turns out, the hormones regulating key functions—like ovulation, metabolism, and even mood—are incredibly sensitive to your energy intake.

In fact, changing how much—and even when—you eat can mess with reproductive hormones. This can lead to a far-reaching ripple effect, causing all sorts of health issues.

Does intermittent fasting work for women?)

Will intermittent fasting break your metabolism?

One of the biggest objections to the concept of IF is the idea that people should eat frequently to “boost their metabolism.” But there are a couple of problems with that theory.

Problem #1: The “metabolism-boosting” effects of frequent eating are overrated, especially for losing fat, research suggests.

A number of years ago, some nutrition experts thought frequent meals would help folks boost metabolism through something called the thermic effect of food (TEF).

TEF is the energy used to digest, absorb, and utilize the nutrients from your food. The theory was that by eating more often, you were stimulating TEF more often.

We’ve since learned, however, that the number of meals doesn’t matter. TEF is stimulated equally whether you eat three 600 Calorie meals or six 300 Calorie meals.

Problem #2: There's a difference between fasting and starving. Check out the definitions below.

- Fasting: Going without food long enough (usually 8-48 hours) to trigger the body to dip into stored energy.
- Starving: A state of extreme nutrient and energy deprivation that can potentially kill us.

The difference between the two is one of the key reasons IF probably won't mess with your metabolism.

Of course, you want to fast long enough to see benefits, but not so long that your body and brain start to think you're in trouble.

So the question is: How long can you remain in that fasted state before things go horribly wrong? The answer depends on your individual physiology. For most people, fasting one day a week offers benefits without many risks. It's the same with 5:2 eating and 16:8 fasting.

Fasting twice a week or every other day? It can work for some people—but creates problems for others.

Will intermittent fasting make you ridiculously hungry?
Maybe not.

To explain why we'd like to tell you about a one-day experiment I suggest to my clients: Fast for 24 hours.

Oh, do people fear this experiment? They worry so much about how bad it will be.

But by the end of the 24 hours?

They tell me things like, "You know, it wasn't as bad as I thought it would be. I thought I would be a lot hungrier."

There's a scientific reason for this. Hunger hormones are released in waves based on when our bodies expect us to eat, which is usually after about five hours of not eating.

But if you don't eat at that time, the wave of hunger will diminish, until the body thinks it's time to eat again.

Do you know that hungry feeling you get about four or five hours after your last meal?

Where your stomach's rumbling to remind you that it's been a while?

Hunger peaks at that point—and immediately diminishes.

After a while, even if you haven't eaten, you get less hungry.

About 20-24 hours later, hunger comes back again. But never as bad.

End result: Fasting doesn't generally make you feel as hungry as you might expect.

Bottom line: Fasting does work.

When it comes to fasting, there's a sweet spot. We'll tell you more about what that looks like in the coming chapters. For now, just know this: don't Fast too intensely or for too long.

Get it just right, however, and people can experience a wide range of benefits, ranging from improved fat loss to better health.

In the next chapter, we'll explore those benefits in depth.

A glass jar filled with a golden-yellow liquid, likely lemon water, is the central focus. The jar is packed with ice cubes and garnished with several fresh green mint leaves and a slice of lemon. The jar sits on a dark, textured surface. In the foreground, there are more lemon slices, some whole peppercorns, and a small piece of vanilla bean. The background is dark and out of focus.

**I FAST
FOR GREATER
PHYSICAL AND
MENTAL
EFFICIENCY**

Chapter 04

Benefits of intermittent fasting

The potential benefits of intermittent fasting are wide-ranging, from reverse aging to weight loss to PREVENTING DISEASES. But there's a crucial caveat to understand: If you fast excessive or too intensely, the positives diminish.



04

Intermittent fasting might cure certain health problems, particularly metabolic conditions such as insulin, blood sugar problems, cholesterol and triglycerides, and inflammation.

Fasting isn't that easy. Though it can be helpful, fasting isn't necessarily better than other methods, like the conventional caloric deficit.

There are some people who shouldn't fast. In this chapter, I'll explain who and why.

Intermittent fasting offers many benefits. But it doesn't benefit everyone equally.

Potential health benefits of Intermittent fasting?

According to a good range of studies, intermittent fasting (IF) might ease or prevent a variety of health conditions, including cancer, type 2 diabetes, and a heart condition, weight loss, boost brain health

That may make IF appear to be a one-size-fits-all cure-all, which is why we'd wish to start this chapter by remarking on two huge caveats.

Caveat #1: Intermittent fasting can only boost health so much. It's not a linear relationship. If you fast longer and harder, It might end up so well.

But, if you've got room to boost, you'll probably notice some changes. On the opposite hand, if you're already doing well, you may do much better, possibly because your metabolic and other health markers are already good.

Caveat #2: Many of the advantages rely on fasting being intermittent.

Consistently restricting energy or nutrients for an extended time can actually reverse many IF benefits.

Those caveats out of the way, let's check out the potential benefits of IF.

Benefit #1: Intermittent fasting might slow aging.

None of us can stop aging.

But we can age more slowly, and fasting may be a way to do that. Fasting seems to slow cellular senescence.

What does cellular senescence mean, exactly—and why do you have to care?

Senescence may be a big word that refers to the condition or process of degradation. When we're talking about the senescence of a cell, we mean a cell has aged to the purpose where it can't divide and regenerate.

When our cells senesce:

- They stop growing and repairing.
- They resist beneficial death (called apoptosis).
- They release pro-inflammatory, tissue-destroying chemicals.
- They increase protein synthesis (the formation of proteins) and glycolysis (the breakdown of glucose).
- The ends of their chromosomes—called telomeres—shorten, and that they show genetic damage.

Now, to a point, senescent cells are available handy. For example, they could help suppress tumors or improve our immunity.

But as we age and senescent cells accumulate, they begin causing problems like inflammation, chronic diseases, metabolic dysfunction, poor recovery, and most of the unpleasant physical things we associate with “getting old.”

Senescence is inevitable but malleable. That means we will speed it up, or slow it down.

We can speed it up with things like:

- environmental toxins
- DNA damage
- free radicals
- chronic and intense stress (which is another reason to focus on the “intermittent” aspect of IF)
- some drugs

We might be ready to slow it down with IF.

To understand why we'd like to define a couple of more key terms.

Let's start with apoptosis or programmed cell suicide. Apoptosis may be a crucial part of keeping us healthy, especially as we age.

Other, less drastic forms of cell clean-up include Autophagy: Cells pack up damaged or dysfunctional cellular material and recycle it.

Mitophagy: Mitochondrial dysfunction triggers self-digestion.

Interestingly, senescent cells resist these natural cleanup processes. They keep hanging onto life, albeit they're not helpful.

Fasting and energy restriction both increase apoptosis, autophagy, and mitophagy.

The potential benefits could show up as decreased inflammation and/or improved longevity.

Fasting may improve cellular signaling.

Our cells' health and longevity depend upon clear and proper chemical communication. When this breaks down, so do our cells.

Some of the key signaling pathways that IF potentially affects are:

AMP-activated protein kinase (AMPK) signaling: AMPK is an energy sensor that coordinates an outsized, integrated signaling network that regulates health and longevity. AMPK responds to both low oxygen (hypoxia) and low energy. Activating AMPK (for instance, through fasting) seems to improve lifespan as well as overall health.

Antioxidant signaling: Cellular oxidation may be a natural part of metabolism, and it's often likened to rusting. Our bodies have their own antioxidant systems to clear the rust, but they slow and break down with age. Fasting may increase the expression of important genes in the antioxidant system and help with overall improved cell signaling.

Insulin/insulin-like growth factor-1 (IGF-1) pathway: Insulin and IGF-1 are important for normal growth and anabolism (a crucial thing about muscle gain) throughout the body. But, if these hormones are too high for too long, we have a greater risk of diseases associated with growth, like cancer. Downregulating this pathway (or decreasing its activity) seems to increase lifespan as happens in IF.

Chapter 05

Weightloss and Intermittent Fasting

Intermittent fasting offers several weight loss benefits, and lot of individuals swear by it. Intermittent fasting may preserve metabolism during weight loss while also defusing cravings. But it also can disrupt hormones and appetite—and result in bouts of overeating. Let's explore the pros and cons of doing intermittent fasting for fat loss.



05

Intermittent fasting offers several upsides. But it also can disrupt hormones and appetite—and result in bouts of overeating.

More fasting isn't always better for fat loss. What's important: Finding the correct IF balance for your body.

Fasting works great for some people—and horribly for others. And it's not necessarily better than conventional caloric restriction.

After all, Anyone doesn't want to lose muscle, water, bone, or any of the opposite components that structure our total weight. So from here on out, we'll see weight loss as fat loss. And when it involves fat loss, there's a universal formula that goes like this: eat fewer calories than you burn.

Despite what some people might say, that formula holds true in spite of what diet you try—whether it's keto, calorie counting, or IF. Here's the thing: eating fewer calories than you burn isn't easy. For most diets, being hungry is an element of the method. And that kinda sucks.

IF might help solve this problem, a minimum of for a few people. With IF, people can eat normally during non-fasting periods, and fewer during fasting periods—without having to battle their hunger 24-7.

It also offers other potential fat loss benefits, starting from boosting metabolism to raised hunger and fullness cues.

In this chapter, we'll dive into the science of how IF could help people seeking to reduce, exploring:

- The fat loss benefits of IF
- How IF affects metabolism and hormones
- The risks of IF
- How to maximize the advantages of IF while minimizing the risks

The benefits of intermittent fasting for fat loss

IF offers many upsides—as well as a few potential downsides. We'll start with what works.

Fat loss benefit #1:

Intermittent fasting may keep the metabolism going.

Usually, when we eat less energy than we need, our bodies respond with several metabolic adaptations.

It's a cruel irony: The more we try to lose fat, the harder it becomes. For instance:

- We get hungrier and are less satisfied when we do eat.
- We want to move around less.
- We expend less energy on normal metabolic activities.
- We don't repair or recover as well.

- Levels of many hormones drop, including sex, thyroid, and many anabolic (growth-promoting) hormones.
- We notice our digestion slowing down.

All of these changes mean we use less energy overall, making fat loss more challenging.

IF varies how much energy we take in day to day, which, in theory, might prevent or decrease many of these metabolic adaptations. It probably works best if we don't reduce our energy too much, or too often.

That said, there's a lot of variation among people.

When I experimented with a variety of IF protocols, they sometimes had a win (getting leaner and feeling awesome), and sometimes didn't (looking exhausted and feeling run down).

Fat loss benefit #2: Intermittent fasting may defuse some of our cravings.

The same circuit in our brains that produces natural painkillers, the endogenous opioid system, is also involved in deciding which foods we perceive as tasty and appealing and whether we overeat when we feel deprived.

We can knock this system out of whack by harshly restricting and controlling our food intake. In other words, if we restrict eating too much for too long, we're jonesing for our food drug of choice, or finding it hard to eat normally.

With a little blip of IF restriction here and there, however, we'll probably be fine.

Fat loss benefit #3: Intermittent fasting can teach you a ton about hunger.

The thought of fasting for a large chunk of the day (or even a whole day) is kinda scary for a lot of people.

But fasting teaches us that hunger is just a feeling. It's not an emergency—and fasting can help you prove that to yourself. Once you get better acquainted with what happens when you get hungry, you'll be able to sense your hunger and be a better judge of when and how much to eat.

The cons of intermittent fasting for fat loss

Okay, so we just told you about a few pros. But IF also poses a few risks that you should know about if fat loss is your goal.

Con #1: While some fasting can help, a lot of fasting may backfire. Maybe you've heard of the hormesis effect. A little shot of a disruptive stimulus (such as a workout) may make us healthier or better, but a sustained, overzealous program of that stimulus may destroy us.

The same is true with fasting. If we push energy restrictions too far for too long, we start to see problems. Especially if we combine it with other stressors, ranging from hard training to a toxic work environment.

We've explained just two of those problems below.

Thyroid and adrenal disruption

The hypothalamus and pituitary gland in the brain are highly sensitive to stress. They secrete hormonal signals that affect the activity of "downstream" organs such as the thyroid gland, adrenal glands, and gonads (ovaries or testes).

These feedback loops are known, respectively, as the HPT, HPA, and HPG axes.

With prolonged stress or under-nutrition, the hypothalamus and pituitary gland may tell downstream organs to reduce their hormonal production, leading to problems like low thyroid function (which slows metabolism) or low sex hormone production.

Women's bodies seem to be much more sensitive than men's to energy and nutrient restriction. This is especially true for women who are already active and/or have relatively lower levels of body fat.

So, if you're female, approach IF with caution, and change course immediately if you notice disruptions to your normal hormonal cycles.

Appetite Disruption

Another issue: When we eat less (and/or lose body fat), particularly over a long period of time, the hormones and peptides that govern appetite, satiety, and nutrient sensing shift.

Leptin, insulin, pro-opiomelanocortin (POMC), and alpha-melanocyte-stimulating hormone (α MSH) go down.

Neuropeptide Y (NPY), orexin, and ghrelin go up.

End result: We feel hungrier and are less satisfied when we do eat.

So if you're training hard, restricting nutrients, struggling with disordered eating, and/or have other stressors in your life...

IF might actually make things worse.

Bottom line: The goal with IF is to find a balance—enough fasting to see the benefits, but so much that you start to feel the drawbacks.

Con #2: For some people, the benefits of intermittent fasting may be offset by overeating.

Not everyone reacts to fasting the same way.

Some people eat normally during their non-fasting windows. And some eat less.

Other people? They eat more. A heck of a lot more.

That's because, in some people, IF increases the production of hunger hormones (such as ghrelin), and decreases the production of satiety hormones (such as leptin).

That means they're hungrier when it's time to eat, and it's harder for them to feel satisfied.

Bottom line: If you end up feasting after every fast, you may not lose as much (or any) fat.

Con #3: Morning fasts can lead to late-night snacks.

Many of my clients struggle with overeating in the evening.

When I explore this, we often find that they're skipping breakfast. Some are rushing through lunch, too.

Others don't eat much protein, healthy fats, or fiber earlier in the day. If they eat breakfast, it's a bowl of cereal or nothing at all; lunch might be a sad sandwich.

By the time dinner rolls around, they're starving and it's hard to control their appetite. After dinner, it's snack time and they find themselves raiding the pantry with a seemingly uncontrollable drive to eat.

When we ask these clients to eat a breakfast with protein, healthy fats, fiber, and some fruits or vegetables and do the same at lunch, often their evening overeating magically disappears or at least is drastically reduced.

So should we eat breakfast or not?

The answer, of course: it depends—on many different factors. The only reliable way to know whether you're a breakfast person: self-experimentation. Try eating breakfast every day for a while. Then try skipping it, all the while keeping notes on what happens. If you discover through experimentation that fasting in the morning suits you—and you're not overeating later—then keep doing it.

On the other hand, if you find out that skipping breakfast is a one-way trip to Snacktown in the evening, then you'll want to make some changes to your morning routine.

Bottom line: What matters most (as with every recommendation in this ebook) is that you follow the evidence your body gives you.

How to find your intermittent fasting fat loss sweet spot

It's clear that some IF can work wonders for people trying to lose fat, but too much can backfire.

So how exactly do you find that just-right place, where you're fasting enough to reap the benefits, but not so much that you're suffering the side effects?

We'll explore that question in-depth. For now, consider easing into fasting by eating less—but not zero—on your “fasting” days. When people eat up to 20 to 25 percent of their normal daily energy intake, we've found they don't feel as deprived, and they're more likely to stick to the plan.

For a 200-pound (91 kilogram) person, this might mean:

- 4 days per week, they eat a “normal” intake, perhaps 3000 Calories daily.
- 3 days per week, they eat 25 percent of that, or 750 Calories.
- Over time, this averages out to around 2035 Calories per day, or about 10 times their body weight in daily calories.

That’s a recipe for a nice, relatively steady fat loss progression, and likely something that an average person could sustain, especially with coaching and support.

Chapter 06

DIFFERENT TYPE OF "IF" SCHEDULES

Whether it's 16:8, 20:4, 5:2, alternate day fasting, or something else, determining the right intermittent fasting schedule for you (or a client) depends on a variety of factors. Here, I'll outline all your schedule options, and provide you with specific advice for each.



06

Is there a “best way” to fast that works the same for everyone? Probably not. (But that’s okay.)

- Match the plan to the person. People are different. So it’s all about finding the right path for each individual.
- There are many IF schedules. Feel free to explore them all, or pick one that seems like a good fit for your body, goals, and lifestyle.
- Look at the big picture. It’s easy to get lost in the details of specific schedules. Focus instead on the underlying ideas and practices that makes a fasting schedule work.

Intermittent fasting works—at least for some people. But which fasting schedule is best?

In this chapter, I'll take an in-depth look at that question. But first, I must issue a warning.

No single intermittent fasting (IF) schedule will work for all people in all situations.

Sorry. I wish it were different.

It would make everything so much easier.

In reality, the effectiveness of any IF schedule depends on the person following it. We'll explore that ultimate IF truth throughout this chapter.

In addition to reviewing the top IF schedules, we'll help you figure out which one will likely work. We've included specific advice for:

- Skip-a-meal fasting, which is exactly what it sounds like
- Fasting for 12-24 hours as an experiment
- 16:8 fasting, or confining your eating to 8 hours of the day, and fasting for the other 16
- 20:4 fasting, or eating all of your food during a 4-hour window
- Fasting 1-2 full days a week, or not eating for 24 hours once or twice each week
- Alternate day fasting (ADF), or eating every other day
- 5:2 fasting, which is eating normally five days a week and restricting calories two days a week
- Fasting mimicking diets (FMD), or consuming half as much as usual for a few days to a week, then eating normally for 3-4 weeks

The best intermittent fasting schedules

Before you can choose the best fasting schedule for you, you need to know your options. Here, we've outlined the main ones, starting with the easiest and ending with the more advanced methods.

Schedule #1:

Skipping a meal sometimes

Though it may not offer all of the physiological benefits of true IF, meal-skipping offers an easy way to ease into IF.

What it involves

There are a couple of ways to try this schedule.

Level 1: Wait until you're hungry to eat. You might remember this from the previous chapter as "IF Lite." So if you're not hungry for breakfast when you wake up, for example, you might wait to have your first meal until 11 am.

Level 2: Sometimes, don't eat a meal you'd normally eat.

For instance, if you'd normally eat dinner, and you're not actually hungry for it... don't. Or skip lunch. Or breakfast. Try intentionally skipping a meal once or twice a week and see how you feel.

People who benefit

This is an approachable way for beginners to explore how their bodies and minds respond to hunger.

You'll discover: Are you the type of person who can experience hunger, ride it out, and use what you learn to graduate to more intense fasting schedules? Or are you better suited to regular meals and snacks?

If you try it

- Consider the timing of your meals. If you plan to skip breakfast, for example, think about whether you want to eat lunch at your usual time or whether you'd benefit from having it an hour earlier?
- Plan how you'll break your fast. If you have prepped food ready to go, you'll be less likely to snarf down an entire pizza.
- Pay attention to your sensations of hunger. Do they come and go? Can you easily ignore them? Or do they continually distract you?
- Notice how you eat during your first meal after the fast. Do you consume your usual amount of food at the usual pace? Or do you gulp twice as much down quickly, and still feel unsatisfied?

Schedule #2:

Fasting for 12-24 hours, as an experiment

Go a full 24 hours without eating.

(Or as long as possible, up to 24 hours, within the context of an average day.) It's scary, and it makes people uncomfortable. Which is exactly why we do it.

What it involves

There are no "rules" or protocols. For instance, people can wake up, have breakfast, then not eat again until breakfast the next day. Or they can have dinner on a Monday, then not eat again until dinner on Tuesday. Or whatever suits them.

The point is to simply try the experience of not eating for a while, and see what happens. Afterward, eat normally.

People who benefit

A one-day fast can be transformative for anyone who associates the sensation of hunger with "emergency." That tends to include people who learned from their parents that they should eat three square meals a day, as well as finish everything on their plate.

It's also great for people who fear being deprived or restricted, assuming that once they start getting hungry, it's going to get worse, and worse, and worse (which, by the way, isn't true).

And finally, it's a great first step that allows you to test the waters, seeing if a more extreme fasting schedule—such as once- or twice-weekly fasting—might work for them.

If you try it

- Notice your physical sensations, and how they change. Pay attention to the physical feeling of "empty" versus the more familiar feeling of "full." Or how hunger comes and goes. Or how your energy level shifts. Or fluctuations in your ability to concentrate. Or whatever else your body shows you. Try to look at these feelings with curiosity.

- Notice changes in appetite afterward. You might notice that you're hungrier than usual immediately after a day of fasting, or during the next few days. This can easily lead to overeating, so it's something to be aware of if you're considering fasting on a more consistent basis.
- Notice bargaining and storytelling. It's easy to play little games like "rewarding" yourself for having a fasting day. Again, this can lead to overeating.
- Notice whether this experiment pushes you to go further, and consider whether that's healthy and appropriate for you. If you learned a lot about hunger, didn't hate the experience, and ate normally the day after the fast, then fasting one or two days a week (see schedule #5) might be for you. On the other hand, if you spent the day staring at the clock and the following day with your face buried in an apple pie, full-day fasting may not be your jam.

Schedule #3:

16:8, 20:4, OMAD, and other types of time-restricted feeding Popularized and researched by Satchidananda Panda, PhD, time-restricted feeding (TRF) combines a fasting window with a feeding window. During the fasting window, people either don't eat at all or eat much less than usual. During the feeding window, people may either eat normally or more than normal. In theory, this protocol takes advantage of our natural circadian rhythm to optimize metabolic health.

What it involves

Three of the more popular types of time-restricted eating include:

- 16:8, which calls for a 16-hour fast followed by an 8-hour eating window.
- 20:4, which entails fasting for the first 20 hours of each day, and then eating only during a 4-hour "overfeeding" window. Generally, most people put their 4-hour overfeeding window at the end of the day, as it's more convenient for family dinners and after-work training sessions.
- OMAD, or one meal a day, which involves consuming all of your calories within 1 hour and nothing for the other 23 hours.

- In each approach, some people focus on including highly-satiating foods such as colorful veggies and lean protein. These foods can help to dampen hunger during the fasting window.

For someone following 16:8, it might look like this:

Monday, 8 pm: Finish your last meal of the day.

Tuesday, 11 am: Work out.

Tuesday, 12pm: Eat your first meal, ideally the biggest one of the day.

Tuesday, 12-8 pm: "Feeding window" during which you eat your daily energy intake.

Tuesday, 8 pm: Last meal of the day ends, and the fasting period starts.

People who benefit

Time-restricted eating is a great next step for anyone who skips a meal (see schedule #1) and thinks, "I could eat like that every day." It can also work nicely when your lifestyle or personal preferences just plain interfere with things like eating breakfast every day. For someone who never enjoyed breakfast, it can be a relief to wait until 11am or later to start eating. And for people who work at night, a big meal at 3 or 4pm—and nothing afterwards—might help them stay focused at work.

If you try it

- Start with a trial period. Pick an eating window you're confident you can handle, such as 12 hours. If all goes well, you can shrink the eating window from there. So if you normally eat dinner at 7 pm, you might shift to a 6 pm meal instead. The next day, try 5 pm. And so on.
- Be flexible about the eating window. Many people find that, with some experimentation, they land on a fasting/feeding schedule that falls outside of the 16:8 and 20:4 methods. For example, they might eat strictly 16:8 during the week, but graze all weekend long. Or they might alternate between 16:8 and 20:4 depending on what's going on in their lives.
- This is about more than just timing. No fasting schedule will make up for a poor-quality diet. Nutrition fundamentals still matter. Eat real food, and eat it slowly. (For more about the fundamentals, see "The 5 universal principles of good nutrition.")
- Experiment with training on an empty stomach. See what happens when you get your workout in before you have your first meal. (Note: Caffeine helps many people work out while fasted). Then have your biggest meal right after your workout.

Here's what happened when I tried time-restricted feeding. "I didn't want to give up my big breakfasts, so I chose evening fasting first." "I normally trained in the mornings, so this worked for me." However, I noticed three things about my sleep when fasting in the afternoons and evenings.

First, I was much more tired. "Once my battery ran out, I was done. Getting up the stairs to bed was a terrific ordeal,"
Second, although, I didn't sleep well.
Third, I woke up extremely early—at a consistent 4 am.
Later, I experiment with skipping breakfast and lunch.
"At first, that felt like much more of a sacrifice,"
Eventually, I got to like the efficiency of waking, grabbing a cup of tea, and getting straight to work. And I slept a lot better after a good meal in the evenings.

Bottom line: For any fasting schedule, you'll want to experiment, tweak the plan, and do what works for you.

Schedule #4:

The 5:2 diet

Popularized by Dr. Michael Mosley's The Fast Diet, this approach involves consuming a lot less food two days of the week, and eating normally the other five.

Maybe you're thinking, "That's not fasting! That's part-time dieting!" And you're right.

Technically, this style of eating is called intermittent energy restriction (or IER).

What it involves

Exactly what and how much someone eats on the two "fasting" days can vary from around 20 percent of normal intake to 70 percent. For someone consuming 2800 Calories a day, a fasting day might range from 560 Calories to 1900.

As you can imagine, the lower end of that range is a lot more challenging than the upper end.

People who benefit

People who do best with 5:2 fasting tend to have a lifestyle and/or fitness schedules that align with it.

If you try it:

- Experiment with fasting-day meals. Many people find that small meals composed mostly of protein and colorful veggies work best, as they help to dampen hunger.
- On non-fasting days, don't forget the nutrition fundamentals. Eat slowly and mindfully. Choose minimally processed, whole foods most of the time. And consume a variety of colorful veggies, lean proteins, and healthy fats.
- Play around with adding more fasting days—or subtracting them. For example, someone might do a 6:1 diet: dramatically reducing their intake one day a week, but eating normally for six. Another person might do a 4:3—fasting three days out of every four.

Schedule #5:

Fasting 1-2 days a week

On this plan, you fast for a full 24 hours once or twice per week, eating sensibly (higher protein, minimizing processed foods) the other days of the week.

What it involves

It's flexible: You can choose whichever 24 hours you want.

People who benefit

This is an advanced fasting schedule.

It works best for people who've tried either meal skipping (schedule #1) or a one-day fasting experiment (schedule #3) and I thought, that was interesting. Let's see what happens if I push this a bit more."

Note that if you're not ready to fast one or two days a week, there's a nice half step. You can just fast for 24 hours occasionally—say, once a month—as a refresher to remind yourself that hunger is no big deal.

If you try it

- Start with just one fasting day. Two fasting days can be stressful.
- Take an honest look at the rest of your life. Fasting doesn't pair well with things like the sleep deprivation that comes from being a new parent or exhaustion from training for a marathon.
- Train on your non-fasting days. This is especially important if you're exercising intensely.
- On your non-fasting days, eat real food. We're talking plenty of lean protein, colorful veggies, healthy fats, and minimally processed carbs.
- On your fasting days, practice radical self care. Relax. Drink plenty of water or tea. Wrap yourself in a cozy blanket. Breathe deeply and find comfort in ways that work for you.
- Plan for how you will break your fast. Have food you feel good about eating ready to go. Take a few breaths before your first bite. Slow down and enjoy.

Schedule #6:

Fasting mimicking diets

Fasting-mimicking diets (FMD) are similar to the 5:2 diet, except the time scale is longer:

- The low-energy period usually lasts around 3-7 days.
- It's done less often, generally once every 3-6 weeks.

What it involves

In practice, an FMD might include 1 week of low energy intake, say around 50 percent of normal needs, then 3-4 weeks of normal energy intake. Repeat.

People who benefit

This is an advanced fasting schedule that works best for people who have already mastered 5:2 eating or another less intense protocol. It's ideal for people whose lifestyles reinforce the fasting schedule. Consider the life of a long-distance trucker who spends a week on the road followed by a couple of weeks at home. Such a person might decide to eat very little while driving.

Why? For one, they're quite sedentary, so their body doesn't need as much energy. Two, they may be incentivized to drive as long as possible and not want to take lots of breaks.

Then when that trucker arrives home, they might eat more normally. If you try it

- Take extra care of yourself during your fasting week. Many people can ride out hunger for a day or two. But a week? That takes practice. And commitment. As much as possible, pair your low energy period with activities that fill your cup.
- Practice eating less. Before trying an FMD, experiment with milder fasting schedules. Try eating less for a day. Then try two days. Then three, and so on.
- Be flexible. Plan for what you'll do if you mess up. Because you will mess up. If you planned to do a seven-day low energy period but only get through four, that's okay. It really is. Rather than beating yourself up, consider what you can learn from the experience.
- Don't forget to drink fluids. This is especially important if you usually only consume fluids with meals.
- Enlist some help. You'll need to carefully plan your food intake to make sure you're meeting your micronutrient needs (vitamins, minerals, and so forth), so it helps if you're working with a nutrition coach or another qualified practitioner.

Schedule #7

Alternate day fasting

With alternate day fasting (ADF) you eat every other day.

What it involves

You eat normally one day. The next day, you don't eat. Repeat.

People who benefit

This is an advanced fasting schedule that works best for people who have already mastered fasting one or two days a week.

As with **schedule #6**, it's ideal for people whose lifestyles reinforce the fasting schedule. Think of hospital medical professionals who work 12-24 hour shifts. For them, it might be easier and even preferable to not eat during their shift.

If you try it:

- Practice fasting for shorter periods, first. Again, this is an advanced practice. Before trying alternate day fasting, experiment with fasting once or twice a week.
- Plan for when you will break your fast. Make sure you've got food at the ready.
- Be flexible. If you break the fast early, you didn't screw up. Try to learn from it and move on. Also, try not to compensate for mistakes by fasting even harder. For example, if you eat dinner on a fasting day, don't skip a meal on your eating day in order to make up for it.
- Take time off from fasting when your life gets busy. ADF doesn't pair well with hard training, excessive life stress, or even someone's monthly menstrual cycle.

Watch out for the side effects of intermittent fasting

Your sex, stress level, and age can increase the chances of IF side effects like insomnia, fatigue, and poor recovery. This is especially true for intense fasting schedules like alternate day fasting.

Side effect #1: Intense fasting can disrupt sex hormones.

If estrogen is your dominant sex hormone (for instance, that assigned female at birth), you may be more sensitive to energy intake than someone who has testosterone as their dominant sex hormone (for instance, those assigned male at birth). Piling on too many stressors—extreme exercise coupled with extreme dieting, for example—can lead to a cascade of problems, including:

- mood disorders and mental health problems
- thinking and memory problems
- low bone density
- joint injuries and inflammation
- digestive problems
- poor recovery and repair
- sleep problems
- cardiovascular and other metabolic diseases

Side effect #2: IF is a stressor, which can make you feel run down.

If someone's under a lot of pressure, a gentler form of fasting is probably best. If you attempt an advanced fasting schedule such as ADF, you'll want to give your body plenty of TLC on your fasting days—and schedule exercise for your eating days.

Side effect #3: The older you are, the less fasting your body will embrace.

If you're older, your "reserve tank" of hormonal production is already relatively lower. So if you add fasting, especially if you're also already lean, you're going to deplete that tank even faster. Tread carefully.

**I BELIEVE
HEALING STARTS IN OUR
HOMES, MORE
SPECIFICALLY IN OUR
KITCHENS**



Chapter 07

INTERMITTENT FASTING AND WORKOUTS

Fasting and exercise don't always mix because they're both stressors. In this chapter, we'll dig into what science tells us about intermittent fasting and exercise, how to balance your workout schedule with your fasting schedule, and when to do low intensity, high intensity, and active recovery workouts.



07

How you exercise matters. Combining moderate exercise with intermittent fasting tends to work better than either zero exercise or intense exercise.

- If your body weight dips too low, or your negative energy balance is too extreme, your body will adapt by decreasing your spontaneous activity. In other words, lying on the couch starts to look like the best possible option.
- Your ability to perform while fasting depends on several factors. They include: Your genetics, the fasting schedule, the type of exercise, and your recovery.

There's really no getting around this, so we'll just come out and say it. Depending on the intermittent fasting (IF) schedule you follow, your exercise performance will most likely suffer—at least for a while.

The good news: You don't need to stop working out. You need only find your sweet spot—that magical place where you're working out “just enough” and fasting “just enough” to meet your goals.

In this chapter, we'll give you a road map that can lead you to that place. You'll learn:

- Why athletic performance tends to go downhill when people try IF—and what to do about it
- The type of exercise that works best with IF
- How to organize your IF schedule around your workouts

What Ramadan can teach us about intermittent fasting

During the holy month of Ramadan, observant Muslims fast every day from sunrise to sunset for about 30 days. The fast-breaking evening meal is often a big dinner.

Over the years, researchers have studied observant Muslims in an effort to find out how fasting affects a range of outcomes, including athletic performance. As it turns out, Muslim athletes tend to do worse in the early weeks of a Ramadan fasting schedule, research finds.

How someone performs depends on several factors:

- The individual athlete: Just as some athletes can train harder and longer than others, some also adapt to fasting more easily and more quickly than others. Hello, genetics.
- Recovery and nutrition: Adequate rest, sleep, hydration, and nutrition can all help the body to adapt more quickly to IF and heavy training.
- The fasting schedule: Less intense types of fasting (such as the 16:8 protocol) pair better with heavy exercise than more intense styles of fasting.
- The type of exercise. Fasting is more likely to negatively affect more intense training. (More about this below).

The following activities generally don't pair well with IF. If any of these are your jam, you can probably expect your performance to suffer as your body adapts to this new way of eating:

- activities that require intense effort (such as 200-400 meter runs)
- speed endurance, such as repeated short, intense runs in soccer
- repeated power-explosive movements like jumping
- some types of strength and work capacity

You may notice, for example, that you can't run or cycle up hills like you used to. And if you strength train, you might not be able to bang out as many push-ups or pull-ups.

Worse, if you try to power through, your body will likely undo your efforts in other ways. I paired twice-weekly fasting with a fairly intense exercise schedule, I found I was dead tired by mid-afternoon. "It's like I'm a video game character starting off with 10/10 on the power bar, and by late evening there are only three bars left." Why? my body was conserving calories, which kept me on the couch. Unless I forced myself to get up and do stuff, I was neutralizing my negative energy balance.

But it's not all bad news.

Pairing exercise with IF can boost results, too.

One study looked out at how people did when they tried alternate day fasting (ADF)—either with exercise or without it. Here's how exercise (or no exercise) affected heart health (based on levels of LDL cholesterol), body fat, and lean mass (such as muscle, bone, connective tissue, and internal organs):

Pointer #1: Pair low-intensity exercise with any intermittent fasting schedule.

Our ancestors didn't kill themselves with tough training sessions. In fact, they wanted to do the opposite: conserve valuable energy and stay uninjured as long as possible.

Most of their exercise was rambling, such as walking, which goes perfectly with IF. That means:

- If you're not currently exercising intensely, maintain that status quo when experimenting with IF fasting schedules.
- If you are currently exercising intensely, consider reducing or eliminating your high-intensity training and adding more daily-life rambling-type movement instead.

Pointer #2: With demanding fasting schedules, decrease workout intensity.

It's easy to fool ourselves into thinking we'll be the exception to the rule. All too often, we eventually find out we're the rule after all.

What actually counts as "too much" exercise will depend on you, but a good general guideline would be:

- no more than 3-4 hours a week of heavier resistance training
- no more than 2-3 brief sessions of metabolic conditioning a week (intervals, high-intensity cardio, circuit training)
- no more than 1-2 hours a week of moderate-intensity cardio (if any)

Pointer #3: Time eating around workouts.

As you'll see throughout this ebook, there's no one best way to organize fasting and non-fasting periods. Self-experimentation (pointer #4) can show you what works best for you.

However, most people find they do best when they schedule their workouts on the days they're better fed. It allows them to have enough energy for workouts as well as nutrients for recovery.

In this regard, the "intermittent" part of IF can work more effectively than a standard caloric deficit.

For instance, if you were cutting calories by 75 percent three days a week and eating normally on the other four, your workout schedule might look like this:

Pointer #4: To find what works for you: experiment.

We mentioned experimentation in several of the previous chapters, and we'll mention it here, too.

You might discover that you're one of the rare people who can push yourself to the max with both exercise and IF.

- Less frequent fasts and/or fasts of shorter duration
- Eating your largest meals after exercise
- Increasing your energy intake to match your exercise needs

Or you might land on a completely different strategy.

The point: Learning what's right for you usually requires a bit of trial and error. And that trial and error are the best and only way to find your own unique personal recipe. For more on how to experiment with fasting, keep reading. The next chapter explains everything you need to know.

Chapter 08

HOW TO PRACTICE INTERMITTENT FASTING

Many people search for detailed rules to help them learn how to intermittent fast. Poring over the “rules” won’t get you anywhere, though. A better strategy is to try a schedule and see how it goes, collecting data about your experience along the way and making adjustments as needed. Here’s a framework for doing just that.



08

Experimentation helps you learn what’s right for you. Rather than following someone else’s rules, you get to explore and develop your own.

- Self-experiments keep us moving forward. This in turn creates sustainable change and growth.
- For best results, have a clear goal and follow a systematic process. This includes defining a research question and progress indicators, tracking yourself closely, and adjusting as needed. Have a plan and know when to change or abort the mission.

- Make your first experiments or actions as simple and small as possible. Keep other elements of your routine consistent, so you can determine what's working (or not).
- If possible, get coaching and support along the way. Outside perspective and expertise enhances your learnings.

Outcome-based decision making.

It involves making decisions based on results and data.

When it comes to intermittent fasting (IF), we use outcome-based decision-making to help clients figure out whether a specific intermittent fasting schedule is right for them.

The key feature of outcome-based decision making: Experiments. By running experiments, learning from the results, and making adjustments as needed, our clients increase their chances of succeeding long term.

These experiments are nothing fancy. If you explored the scientific method in science class, then you probably already have an idea of how to do one. Either way, we'll walk you through the process below.

And if you still feel unsure, consider getting coaching. A coach is much more able to take an objective view, consider the data neutrally, and offer you appropriate feedback on what to do next.

Step 1: Choose an intermittent fasting schedule.

Before you run your experiment, you need something to test, which means you'll need to know which IF schedule you plan to follow. (See chapter 6 for a complete rundown of all the **IF schedules**.)

As a general rule, you'll want to err on the side of picking a schedule that's too easy to follow rather than one that's too hard.

If you've never tried any form of fasting, you'll probably want to start with skipping a meal—or even just delaying one meal by an hour or two.

If you're a fasting veteran, on the other hand, pick something that's just a little bit harder than what you've successfully tried in the past. You want to end up with something you're at least 90 percent confident you can ace.

And if you're worried about it being too easy, remember: You can always make it more challenging in the future.

No matter which IF schedule you choose, use this advice:

- Try not to think of your non-fasting/non-restricted period as an “all you can eat” buffet. Except for specific circumstances (such as doing IF for muscle mass gain or extreme body composition changes), you just want to eat normally. (You’ll read more about this in step 2).
- Resist any urge to overachieve at fasting. As we’ve mentioned before, more fasting is not better. Going without food and nutrients for too long or too often raises your risk of deficiencies, hormonal problems, and burnout.
- Make your schedule fit your life, rather than the other way around. Consider how much work, preparation, and regimentation any particular plan might require. Choose your IF schedule in that context.
- Don’t forget to drink water. This is crucial during your fasting periods.
- Go easy on your workouts. Remember what you learned about working out and IF. Exercise is one stressor. IF is another. If you take on too much at once, you can run your body into the ground, so to speak.

Step 2: Decide what you’re looking for.

- What is the biggest thing you want IF to do for you? Is it fat loss? A better relationship with hunger? Something else?
- When I embarked on a series of IF experiments, I had several goals. But my most important one was to lose body fat.
- That’s how we defined success (even if the trade-offs might have included feeling mentally fuzzy or annoying his family).
- So take time to figure out what you want to explore, learn, and accomplish with IF. You might also want to identify what you’re willing to trade-off for your goal.

Step 3: Determine how you'll measure your outcome.

What does success look like? How will you know whether you're moving in the right direction, and when you've arrived at your goal? Here are just a handful of indicators to consider:

- energy level
- body fat loss
- athletic performance
- recovery
- mood and wellbeing
- blood work
- blood pressure
- pain and/or inflammation
- mobility and/or joint stiffness
- sleep quality and/or duration

And so on. Once you choose your indicator(s), decide how you'll measure it, as well as how often.

Fat loss? That's pretty easy. You can go by scale weight, girth measurements, and/or body fat measurements. But let's say you want to improve your energy levels. You can't just drop by the local pharmacy to pick up an "energy scale."

So you'll have to come up with something. Maybe you create a 10-point scale with 0 being no energy and 10 being the most energy you've ever felt. Then you rank your energy every day at the same time by placing an X on the area of the scale that best represents how you feel.

We suggest monitoring your indicators as often as possible (so you can tell fairly soon if something needs changing).

But keep it easy.

The most perfect indicators won't matter if you can't or won't check them consistently.

Step 4: Gather evidence.

If your goal is something you can measure easily, such as running a faster mile, you can probably jump right into your experiment.

If it's something less palpable—such as energy levels or mood—it may be a good idea to collect at least a week or two of "normal life" data.

This will serve as a baseline, helping you to more easily see what changed when you started IF. Once you know your baseline, spend at least two weeks fasting and gathering data.

That's usually enough time to give your schedule a chance to produce a measurable result. Your goal here is to follow your schedule consistently for long enough to identify a trend.

And this next part is super important:

As much as possible, try not to change any other variables during your fasting experiment.

If you change too much at once, you won't know what worked—or what didn't. So, while you're running your experiment, try to keep your training, weekly calorie intake, stress levels, any supplements you take, and other variables as consistent as possible.

Step 5: Review and interpret the evidence.

Ask yourself:

- How is IF working for you? Consider using this quick and easy quiz to put a number on it.
- Did your schedule help you achieve the outcome you set for yourself?
- Were you able to follow your schedule 80-90 percent of the time?
- And how did you feel? Was this something you feel like you could stay with long-term? Or did it take everything you had just to last a couple of weeks?

Step 6: Based on evidence, decide on next steps.

If the data show you're going in the right direction, keep doing what you're doing. Clearly, this is working for you.

But if you found you IF schedule impossible to stick to and/or you didn't reach your desired outcome:

Don't drive faster down the wrong road because "it should work."

The data are telling you that it's time to change course.

Go back and repeat the process, starting at the very beginning.

If you had trouble sticking to a schedule consistently, consider ways to make it easier. Maybe instead of fasting for a full day once a week, you only fast for half a day.

If you were able to stick to your plan, but you didn't see any measurable changes, consider why—as well as what might help.

- Was it too stressful for your body? If so, you'll want to ease up, either backing off on exercise and other life stressors or attempting a gentler fasting style.

- Was it too easy? Maybe the IF schedule you tested just wasn't enough of a change for you. If that's the case, you might want to experiment with a more advanced fasting schedule.

The more objective and analytical you are, the more accurately you'll understand what happened. From there, you'll be able to make a wise decision about what to do next.

Keep in mind that you may need to embark on several experiments before you get IF just right.

And that's okay.

This is a simple, powerful process.

It's easy to get lost in the details of specific IF schedules—obsessing over a set of rules, created by someone else, that you must follow... at all costs.

For many people, that's often a recipe for disappointment.

On the other hand, self-experimentation allows you to come up with your own rules based on your own data, in your own life. And you can use it to continually learn new things about yourself. There's always the next step and never a dead end.

Mastering self-experimentation makes you the expert, and boss, of your experience.

You'll start feeling in control—of your decisions and your ability to revise and refine your own life.

Best of all: you'll eventually find the eating style, whether it's IF or something else, that works perfectly for you.

By
Sebastian Paul

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