



THE ONLY SUPPLEMENTS YOU NEED TO GET THE BODY YOU WANT.

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT INTERMITTENT FASTING



“Intermittent fasting” is a semi-perfect description of what it is.

You fast...but not necessarily intermittently. In fact, some methods have to do the opposite—fast on a regular schedule.

WHAT IS “FASTING”?

When you eat food, it gets broken down into various molecules that your cells can use like amino acids, glucose, and fatty acids. These molecules find their way into your blood along with insulin, whose job is to shuttle them into cells.

Insulin levels rise in proportion to the size and composition of the meal. The larger the meal and higher in protein and carbohydrate it is, the larger the insulin response. The size and composition of the meal also determines how long insulin levels remain elevated for (anywhere from 2 to 6+ hours).

When your body is digesting and absorbing the food you’ve eaten and insulin levels are “up,” you’re in a “fed” or “postprandial” state. (Prandial means having to do with a meal.)

Once your body has finished processing the food and nutrients, however, insulin levels drop to a low, baseline level and you’re now in a “fasted” or “postabsorptive” state.

HOW DOES INTERMITTENT FASTING WORK?

At its core, intermittent fasting is simply a style of dieting that concerns itself most with when instead of what you eat, and the general goal is to spend more time every day and/or week in a postabsorptive (low insulin) than postprandial (high insulin) state.

You see, with a normal type of diet, you eat food every few hours from, let’s say, 8 AM until 9 PM. That is, every day you eat food intermittently for ~13 hours and eat nothing for ~11 hours.

Due to the time it takes to process food, and depending on the size and composition of your final meal of the day, this means the majority of the time your body spends in a postabsorptive state will be when it’s asleep. (~6 to 7 hours is probably the average.)

With intermittent fasting, you flip this around. You eat food intermittently for, let’s say, ~8 hours, and eat nothing for ~16 hours (the Leangains method, which we’ll

discuss in detail later in this article). So, for example, you might start eating at 1 PM and stop at 9 PM and not eat again until 1 PM the next day.

THE BENEFITS OF FASTING

Research shows that fasting is good for the body. Specifically, there are physiological processes that only occur when in a fasted state, mainly relating to the disposal of waste and the reparation of cells.

One of the more important processes that fasting induces is known as “autophagy,” which is crucial for maintaining muscle mass and counteracting some of the degenerative aspects of aging. In fact, autophagy is the primary anti-aging mechanism of calorie restriction, which has made headlines for its longevity benefits.

Furthermore, research shows that fasting can reduce inflammation biomarkers, improve insulin sensitivity, elevate growth hormone levels, and reduce oxidative damage to various tissues and DNA.

In many ways, fasting is like a systemic “reset” button and research shows it confers a variety of health benefits. Well, one of the primary purposes of intermittent fasting is to hit the button more frequently.

IS INTERMITTENT FASTING HEALTHIER THAN TRADITIONAL DIETING?

There’s no question that cool stuff happens when you’re fasting. The real question, however, is if intermittent fasting is clearly better for your health than traditional continuous-energy dieting. And the jury’s still out on that one. You see, intermittent fasting is still in its scientific infancy, with only a handful of controlled human studies under its belt.

Another vital thing you need to realize is exercise alone provides many of the health benefits associated with intermittent fasting.

If you’re obese, hate moving, and want to lose weight and get healthier, then a low-carb (even ketogenic) intermittent fasting protocol is probably a good way to go.

If you’re a healthy adult that exercises regularly, however, will intermittent fasting provide any special health benefits? We don’t know yet.

INTERMITTENT FASTING AND WEIGHT LOSS

Like any form of dieting, the majority of people turning to intermittent fasting want to lose weight. And yes, it can work just fine for this purpose.

“Losing weight” isn’t a good goal, though. Losing fat is.

This distinction is important because you can starve yourself and do a ton of cardio and lose weight quickly...but a fair amount of it is going to be muscle.

And this raises the question...doesn’t fasting cause muscle loss?

When you’re fasting, your body must rely on its own energy stores, and it has two primary sources of glucose:

- ✓ Glycogen stored in the liver.
- ✓ Body fat.

So long as the body can turn to these two energy sources to sustain itself, it has no reason to cannibalize muscle. As the liver runs out of glycogen, however, the body turns to converting amino acids into glucose.

A study found that amino acids obtained from the breakdown of muscle tissue were responsible for about 50% of glucose maintenance at the 16-hour mark of fasting, and 100% at the 28-hour mark. This is why many intermittent fasting protocols designed for athletes and bodybuilders don’t have you fasting for more than 16 hours.

The bottom line is fasting can cause muscle loss but won’t if it’s done properly.

What About “Starvation Mode”?

Well, physiologically speaking, hunger and starvation are very different things. Hunger is a spark and starvation is a four-alarm fire. And it takes a lot of hunger to turn into true physiological starvation.

True “starvation” of the body occurs at about 3 days (72 hours) of not eating, at which point the primary source of energy becomes gluconeogenesis (the breakdown of proteins).

While “starvation mode” may seem to make sense at first glance, it’s not something you need to worry about when following an intermittent fasting diet.

Does Intermittent Fasting Help You Lose Fat Faster?

When you take a cold, hard look at the science of fat loss, there are really only three ways to appreciably speed it up:

- ✓ You can increase your basal metabolic rate.
- ✓ You can prevent hunger or cravings from ruining your plans.
- ✓ You can make the overall experience of dieting more enjoyable.

Studies show that when calorie deficits are matched, people lose weight equally well on a traditional diet as an intermittent fasting protocol.

If you already know you don't do well going for long periods without food (hunger, irritability, inability to focus, etc.), or if it tends to make you want to overeat, then IF probably isn't for you. And especially not when you're in a calorie deficit.

If, however, you find you can skip breakfast without any issues, and if eating fewer, larger meals is more satisfying to you, then you'll probably like IF.

INTERMITTENT FASTING AND BODYBUILDING

Another big carrot dangled to get you to buy (literally) into intermittent fasting is the promise of building muscle and losing fat at the same time. This is also known as "body recomposition" and is more or less the Holy Grail of fitness.

The reality is this: It's possible to build muscle and lose fat simultaneously...but it's only under certain (unalterable) conditions...and intermittent fasting has nothing to do with it.

Intermittent Fasting and Building Muscle

Sure, you can build muscle with an intermittent fasting diet...but it's not inherently better for this purpose than a traditional diet. So, like with fat loss, it boils down to your personal preferences.

Fasted Training and Intermittent Fasting

Many of the more popular intermittent fasting diets include or recommend training in a fasted state.

Well, while there's nothing wrong with training in a fed state—any exercise burns energy, which supports your weight-loss efforts—research shows that training in a fasted state offers several unique fat loss benefits.

Studies shows that exercising in a fasted state increases both lipolysis and fat oxidation rates. What this means is that when you exercise with your insulin at a baseline level, your body is able to both mobilize and burn more fat during your workouts than when insulin levels are elevated.

Research shows that blood flow in the abdominal region is increased when you're in a fasted state, which helps you burn the "stubborn" fat in this region.

There is a major downside to fasted training, however: it increases muscle breakdown rates. This is undesirable because if you damage and break down too many muscle cells in your workouts, your body won't be able to keep up with repair, and you can lose muscle over time.

Another downside to fasted exercise is lackluster workouts. Many people find they have less energy and focus when training in a fasted state and thus aren't able maintain the level of physical and mental intensity they're used to.

So, as you can see, fasted training is a double-edged sword. It's good for losing fat faster, but it's not so good for maintaining muscle and enjoying your workouts.

Fortunately, you can cancel out these downsides with effective supplementation.

POPULAR INTERMITTENT FASTING DIETS

None of these programs allow you to cheat or sidestep the rules of energy balance. That is, intermittent fasting doesn't let you "eat whatever you want" or not have to watch calorie intake or lose fat in a calorie surplus or any other nonsense.

If you want to see results with intermittent fasting, you need to approach it like any other style of dieting: you need to know and follow your calorie and macronutrient targets to get the results you want.

Leangains

Leangains was created by Martin Berkhan and is the program that popularized IF in the bodybuilding space because it was built specifically for people looking to improve their body composition.

Here's how it works:

- ✔ You fast for 16/14 hours and eat in 8/10-hour "feeding windows."
- ✔ Sleep is going to be a large portion of your daily fast, of course.

- ✓ While fasting, you're not supposed to eat any calories, but black coffee, zero-calorie sweeteners, diet soda, and sugar-free gum are permitted.
- ✓ It's also recommended that you maintain a consistent fasting and feeding schedule because it will help minimize hunger while you fast.
- ✓ You follow a high-protein diet.
- ✓ You eat more calories and carbs on training days than rest days.
- ✓ Fasted training is optional.
- ✓ You should eat a large post-workout meal.

The Warrior Diet

This is Ori Hofmekler's method, as popularized by his book, and it entails fasting for 20 hours every day and eating the majority of your food in one large meal every night.

Furthermore, Hofmekler says you should start that big meal by eating vegetables, and then move to protein, and then fat. If, after eating in that sequence, you're still hungry, only then should you eat carbohydrates.

The 20-hour "fasting" period isn't really fasting because you're allowed to eat a few small snacks of protein, fruit, and/or veggies (which elevate insulin levels and break the fast).

Eat Stop Eat

This method of intermittent fasting was created by Brad Pilon, and it's very simple:

- ✓ Fast for 24 hours once or twice per week.
- ✓ You can start your fasts when you like, but they must go for 24 hours. They must be proper fasts, too—no food is allowed but, like Leangains, calorie-free beverages are okay.

If you can't make it 24 hours, start by fasting for as long as you can and gradually increase this, working toward the full 24 hours.

To make the fasting easier, Brad suggests that you start your fast while you're busy and on a day where you have no social obligations that involve eating.

Furthermore, it's important that you break your fast with a normal meal. You shouldn't pig out to "make up for" the calories you didn't eat during the fast.

The rationale behind the Eat Stop Eat is simple and sensible.

It simply allows you reap some of the health benefits of fasting while reducing your weekly calorie intake, which can result in "easy" weight loss...if you can endure the long fasting periods...and if they don't lead to post-fast binges.

Alternate-Day Fasting

Alternate-Day Fasting (ADF) is a simple method of intermittent fasting that involves alternating between days of normal and restricted eating.

On "normal" days, you eat more or less the amount of energy you burn. On "restricted" days, you eat 20 to 25% of your energy needs (around 500 for most people).

Like Eat Stop Eat, the idea is simply to reduce your weekly caloric intake and thus help with weight loss. And it can work just fine.

I don't feel ADF is best suited to people that take their weightlifting and training seriously for two reasons:

- ✓ You can't eat enough protein on your low-calorie days.
- ✓ Your workouts are going to be horrible on those days as well.

If, however, you're not too worried about your body composition and you want to give intermittent fasting a go, ADF is a good place to start.

THE BOTTOM LINE ON INTERMITTENT FASTING

It would be great if manipulating your eating schedule alone could deliver all these things but it can't. Only an all-inclusive lifestyle of exercise, nutritious foods, good sleep hygiene, etc. can.

So...if you're a healthy adult that exercises regularly, whether you should follow an intermittent fasting protocol or not really just boils down to how you like to eat, and what best fits your lifestyle.

Even if you enjoy a more traditional style of dieting like I do, you can work in a bit of fasting here and there by just skipping breakfast. I'll often do this on the days I don't train because I just enjoy how it feels.

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