



# FASTING GUIDE



# **FASTING GUIDE**

"There is nothing new, except what has been forgotten" Marie Antoinette

#### Introduction

Fasting involves restricting or abstaining from food intake for a period of time to achieve a physical, mental, or spiritual outcome.

Whether voluntary or not, fasting has been a practice throughout all of human evolution. Our ancestors didn't have modern conveniences like grocery stores and refrigerators sometimes they had to go days or even weeks without food.

As a result, we evolved specific adaptations to deal with those periods of famine. We're hard-coded to be able to survive with some regular fasting incorporated into our lives. In fact, fasting is still a common practice among many of the world's populations.

But is there any benefit to fasting in the modern world?

In general there are two points that you here repeated when it comes to eating:

- 1. Never miss breakfast: Starting the day with a good breakfast is essential for firing up your metabolism, and giving you energy for the day.
- 2. Eating every 3 hours: Lots of smaller meals throughout the day will keep your metabolism operating at an optimum level.

There is a lot of marketing around that says we should never be hungry, that we need to be eating throughout the day, and that if we miss meals it will be bad for the body.

For some people this works great and is the best way to maintain great health and a good physique, but it doesn't have to be the only way. There are alternatives, and if you are struggling with the current strategy then fasting could be one worth experimenting with.



#### SIMON'S EXPERIENCE

Co-founder of TNE, Simon, has been fasting for several years:

"For many years I followed the 'eat every 3 hours' protocol and achieved good results this way. While serving in Special Forces one of the guys read the book 'Eat Stop Eat' by Brad Pilon, and suggested giving fasting a try. The theory made sense, and since I believe in self-experimentation I gave it a try and haven't stopped since. For me personally I feel much better eating this way, both in terms of physical energy and mental clarity.

I currently use an eating window each day: I fast for 16-18 hours and eat all of my food in a 6-8 hour window. In practice this means skipping breakfast and having my first meal around 11 or 12 o'clock in the morning and my last meal around 7-8pm. But I have also experimented with doing it the other way around, eating breakfast (8am) and having an earlier dinner around 4pm.

However, I listen to my body and on some days I won't fast at all or switch around the timings. Being flexible and not becoming rigid with this is the key to success I believe. If it begins dominating your thoughts and causing stress then it means you need a break from it.

Fasting is another tool that you can use on your journey to better health and performance, and is just one part of the puzzle. It is not an excuse to eat badly, and as always, the quality of your nutrition is paramount. You also need to make sure





that you are eating the right amount of good quality food to support your goals. If that means you need a longer eating window to fit all of your meals in then adapt it to meet that need.

As with most things health related fasting requires a degree of self experimentation to find out what works for you. We all have different genetics, lifestyles and goals and a 'one size fits all' simply does not exist."



### WHY FAST AT ALL?

Fasting is not a diet, it's a pattern of eating. As such it doesn't change what you eat, it changes when you eat. But often when fasting is mentioned the reactions are usually along the lines of:

- How is this possible?
- Isn't skipping breakfast bad for you?
- Why would anyone fast?
- What are the benefits?
- Is it dangerous?

Fasting has gained popularity in the past few years through celebrity endorsements, and several books on the topic. Hugh Jackman famously powered his Wolverine physique by a form of fasting known as the 16:8 method.

But fasting is not new. It is one of the most ancient healing traditions in human history, and has been practiced by virtually every culture and religion on earth. Fasting for spiritual purposes is still widely practiced today, and remains part of virtually every major religion in the world.

Fasting developed independently among different religions and cultures, not as something that was harmful, but something that was deeply, intrinsically beneficial to the human body and spirit. Thus fasting is ingrained into human heritage, and as old as mankind itself.

From an evolutionary perspective the environment would have chosen our diet rather than us. Our body would have had to have adapted to how often the food was available. In contrast to this modern day wisdom has been that you need to get 3 balanced meals a day to stay healthy.

But the eating patterns and ideals we've inherited are relatively recent inventions, the products of complex social and economic forces, as well as the efforts of ambitious inventors, scientists and health gurus. Eating three meals a day was basically invented due to culture, not out of biological necessity, it is not based on our biological needs.

#### Breakfast Is The Most Important Meal Of The Day

'Breakfast is the most important meal of the day' is a great example and in fact originated from a 1944 marketing campaign named "Eat a Good Breakfast—Do a Better Job". It was launched by General Foods, the manufacturer of Grape Nuts, to sell more cereal.

Before cereal, in mid-1800s America, breakfast was not all that different from other meals. Middle and upper-class Americans ate eggs, pastries, and pancakes, but also oysters, boiled chicken, and beefsteaks.

The rise of cereal established breakfast as a meal with distinct foods and created the model of processed, ready-to-eat breakfast that still largely reigns. And it all depended on advertising that suggests that breakfast is the most important meal of the day.

If as a species, like every other animal in nature, we could not survive without food for extended periods we probably would not be here today. Tribal cultures that survive today still follow this natural pattern of eating.

The Pirahã people, an indigenous hunter-gatherer group of the Amazon Rainforest was extensively studied by an anthropological linguist named Daniel Everett. He found that they do not eat every day or even attempt to do so. They were even aware of food storage techniques yet never used them except to barter with Brazilian traders.

When you talk to people about fasting the initial response can be quite skeptical, especially from men who find it hard to believe that you can build a strong and muscular physique this way. But this is simply not true. Ironically two of the most well known fasting methods originated in books written by bodybuilders.

Fasting should not be seen as a miracle diet or as an excuse to eat rubbish the rest of the time. But if you practice fasting combined with a mostly whole food diet, you can experience some great positive changes.

### What Are The Benefits Of Fasting?

- **1. Simplicity -** Fasting is remarkably easy to implement once you get over the idea that you don't need to eat all the time. There are no expensive supplements or foods to buy, you can do it anywhere, anytime, and the ways to implement it are varied enough to find one which works for you.
- **2. More Focus -** Many people find they are most productive during periods of fasting. This makes sense from an evolutionary perspective. If our ancestors hadn't eaten for a few days they would need to be as alert as possible to do something about it.
- **3. Increased Insulin Sensitivity -** The more sensitive your body is to insulin, the more likely you'll be to use the food you consume efficiently. Fasting provides an efficient and consistent strategy to decrease insulin levels, and increase insulin sensitivity.
- 4. Gut Health There is evidence to suggest that fasting is beneficial for your gut microbes. "When you're not eating, a whole different set of microbes comes and cleans up your gut wall, eating the sugars and things there, and that's important in keeping a good immune balance." The Diet Myth by Tim Spector.
- **5. Less Hunger -** Fasting can help normalise ghrelin levels. (Ghrelin is also known as the hunger hormone, because it is responsible for telling your body that it is hungry.)
- 6. Hit Your Goals Fasting provides defined guidelines. Although we know that not all calories are created equal, caloric restriction plays a central role in weight loss. When you fast, you are also making it easier to restrict your total caloric intake over the course of the week, which can lead to consistent weight loss and maintenance.



#### HOW TO FAST

Fasting can be a great tool, but it needs to be part of a well balanced approach that works for your life. Depending on when you work, when you exercise, if you have a family to prepare meals for, it can get tricky to navigate. Not to mention that fasting is just a piece of the puzzle – you also need to eat well and make exercise a priority!

There are a number of ways to actually perform fasting, and the best one to do is the one which suits you and your lifestyle. Fasting is not for everyone, and you will need to use trial and error to see if, and how, you can make it work for you.

The following are what I would consider to be the two most popular approaches:

#### 1. The 16/8 Protocol (Leangains) -

As popularised by Martin Berkhan, this is by far the most popular method of fasting intermittently. The idea is to fast for 16 hours, then eat all your calories in an 8 hour window. This is the most popular window for most people.

For example, let's say you get up at 6:00 a.m. You would skip breakfast and eat nothing for six hours, then lunch at noon and dinner at 8:00 p.m. This 16:8 split (16 hours fasting and 8 hours eating) is recommended every single day.

You can adjust this window to make it work for your life:

- If you start eating at 7am, stop eating and start fasting at 3pm.
- If you start eating at 11am, stop eating and start fasting at 7pm.
- If you start eating at 2pm, stop eating and start fasting at 10pm.

#### 2. 24 Hr Fasts (Eat Stop Eat) -

As popularised by Brad Pilon, this involves fasting for an entire 24 hours, usually one to two days per week (not on consecutive days).

Let's say you eat your last meal of the day at 8pm the day before. You fast overnight and then all the following day, skipping breakfast and lunch, and then pushing dinner out to 8pm (for a full 24 hours).

You can adjust this window to make it work for your life:

- If you stop eating at 7pm, stop fasting and eat again at 7pm the next day.
- If you start eating at 2pm, stop fasting and eat again at 2pm the next day.
- If you start eating at 10am, stop fasting and eat again at 10am the next day.

## **Common Questions About Fasting**

#### 1. What can I drink while fasting?

In terms of what you can consume during the period of fasting there is some disagreement amongst the community but it is generally seen to be okay to consume non-caloric drinks such as black tea or coffee. But do make sure you drink enough water to stay fully hydrated.

### 2. Can I build muscle and gain weight?

In a word yes. To achieve this you will need to adopt a method that allows you to consume enough calories during your periods of eating. And obviously you need a well structured training programme to go alongside your nutrition.

### 3. Can I still exercise on a fast?

In theory, yes absolutely. If you think back to how we evolved, or look at examples of huntergatherers today, then it makes sense to be able to carry out physical work while in a fasted state. We have been told that if you haven't had a meal in the hours preceding exercise we will not have the energy to complete it. But the fact is if you are using the 16/8 method, then the body will still have plenty of energy for working out. For most people it is the psychological barrier and not the physical one which is the problem. Even after a 24hr fast the body has the capacity to perform a workout. In fact many people find working out after a fast to be their best sessions.

BUT all of this will depend on your training volume and intensity. And you must ensure that you are fueling yourself adequately to support your training and recovery. Basically, be sensible, experiment, and listen to your body.

### 4. Will I lose muscle mass?

If you are following a good training programme and are getting the right amounts of quality food when you are eating then there is no reason for you to lose muscle mass.

The supplement industry loves to tell us that we need to consume 30 g of protein every few hours, as that's the most amount of protein our body can process at a time. Along with that, we've been told that if we don't eat every few hours, our body's muscle will start to break down to be burned as energy.

But our bodies are quite adept at preserving muscle even when fasting, and protein absorption by our body can take place over many many many hours. In fact research seems to suggest that what you are consuming in a 24hr period is of the most importance.

Breakdown of muscle tissue happens at extremely low levels of body fat – approximately 4%. The body preserves muscle mass until the body fat becomes so low that it has no choice. The survival of our species in times of food shortages came from our ability to use our fat stores as energy when there was a temporary shortage of food.

And it's worth noting that the average person has between 50,000–100,000 calories of fat on the body. This is the equivalent of almost a month's worth of stored fat we have available to us.

#### 5. I work shifts, can I fast?

Depending on your training schedule, lifestyle, and goals, simply adjust your hours of fasting and eating. There is no one way to practice fasting, you just need to find a version that suits you.

### 6. How much should I eat when fasting?

Eat for your goals! If your goal is weight loss, you still need to consume fewer calories than you burn every day to lose weight. If your goal is bulking up, you'll need to consume more calories than you burn every day. Intermittent Fasting isn't a cure-all, it's a tool that can be used to help facilitate your goals.

## 7. Will my body go into starvation mode?

The thought process here is that when we don't feed ourselves, our bodies assume calories aren't available and thus choose to store more calories as opposed to burning them, therefore eliminating the benefits of weight loss with fasting.

Starvation mode is significantly overblown and sensationalized these days. It takes a dramatic amount of starvation, for a long, long, long time, before your body kicks into "starvation mode". The periods of fasting we are talking about - 16 to 24 hrs - are not long enough to put your body into starvation mode.

### 8. Won't I get really hungry?

A common misperception of fasting is it will leave you overwhelmed with hunger and therefore prone to severe overeating.

Approximately 4-8 hours after we eat a meal, we start to feel hunger pangs and may become slightly cranky. Occasionally they are quite strong. So we imagine that fasting for a full 24 hours creates hunger sensations 5 times stronger – and that will be intolerable.

But this is not the case because hunger is a highly suggestible state. That is, we may not be hungry one second, but after smelling a steak and hearing the sizzle, we may become quite ravenous. Hunger is also a learned phenomenon.

If we consistently eat breakfast every single morning at 7:00, lunch at 12:00 and dinner at 6:00pm, then the time of day itself becomes a conditioned stimulus for eating. Even if we ate a huge meal at dinner the night before, and would not otherwise be hungry in the morning, we may become 'hungry' because it is 7:00. The Conditioned Stimulus (time of 7:00) causes the Conditioned Response (hunger).

Similarly, if we start to pair the act of watching a movie with delicious popcorn and sugary drinks, then the mere thought of a movie may make us hungry even though we have already eaten dinner and would normally not be hungry. The movie is the conditioned stimulus. Food companies, of course, spend billions of dollars trying to increase the number of Conditioned Stimuli that will make us hungry. The Conditioned Response is hunger – for popcorn, chips, hot dogs, sodas, etc.



So, in essence, there are two major components to hunger. The unconditioned biological stimuli – that is, the part that will normally stimulate hunger naturally (smells, sights, and tastes of food) and the conditioned stimuli (learned – movie, lecture, ball game).

The hormone that regulates hunger is called ghrelin, and is also known as the hunger hormone. And fasting can actually help normalise ghrelin levels to combat conditioned responses.

When you fast, though you might struggle in the beginning, you are actually normalising ghrelin levels. As time goes on you won't feel hungry just because it's your usual meal time. Instead, your body will become more adept in discerning when it actually needs food.

After a brief adjustment period, your body can adapt to the fact that it's only eating a few times a day. The more overweight you are, and the more often you eat, the more of an initial struggle this might be.

#### **Does Fasting Affect Men And Women Differently?**

While some women who try fasting say it's the best thing that's happened to them, others report problems, including binge eating, metabolic disruption and lost menstrual periods.

The truth is, intermittent fasting is relatively new to the mainstream medical system and unfortunately, there haven't been any conclusive studies conducted on the effects of intermittent fasting on women specifically, to date.

What has been found is the effect fasting has on hormones seems to be more pronounced in women for reasons that are not completely clear. It would be nice to find a human study to test the science but there are none which are solely about women, controlled studies or about more than body weight or cardiovascular benefits.

There are a few rodent studies and these found significant negative hormonal changes occurring in the female rats. But that by no means makes it clear cut for humans.



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#### **Stressors & Energy Balance**

Another factor which has been known to have an impact is a negative energy balance which may be to blame for the hormonal domino effect which some women experience. But crucially this is not just about how much food you eat.

Negative energy balance can result from:

- Too little food
- Poor nutrition
- Too much exercise
- Too much stress
- Ilness, infection, chronic inflammation
- Too little rest and recovery

Any combination of these stressors could be enough to put you into a negative energy balance, which for women can result in effects such as stopping ovulation. For example training for a marathon while nursing a flu or too many days in a row at the gym and not enough quality nutrition.

Or it could be intermittent fasting combined with severe worry about a financial matter. The point being that you have to look at all of the contributing factors. And it should be noted that these stressors will have a negative effect regardless of whether you are male or female, they just might manifest in different ways.

#### **Should Women Fast?**

Factors such as your age, your nutritional status, and the other stresses in your life, including exercise, are relevant (for both women and men). We are all individuals and should be treated as such. Listen to your body and respond accordingly.

The challenge is that there aren't enough long-term studies, with large enough sample sizes, specifically targeting female humans, with relation to the different types of Intermittent Fasting. But it does appear that men and women will have different experiences with intermittent fasting.

If you are looking to attempt fasting for weight loss reasons, research has shown that fasting could be less effective for women and thus might be better off having your primary focus on:

- Focusing on the total calories and quality of your food.
- Exercising regularly.
- Getting enough sleep.

#### Who Should Not Fast?

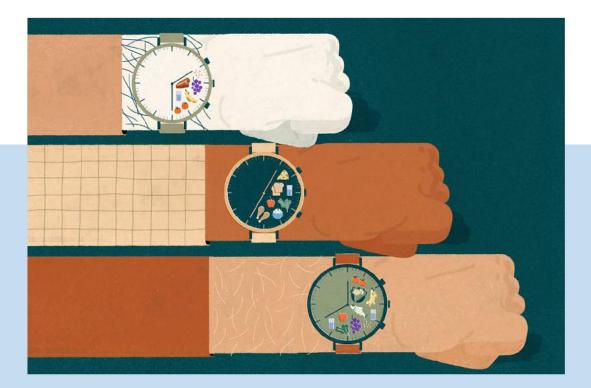
Fasting can be more complex for people who have issues with blood sugar regulation, suffer from hypoglycemia, have diabetes, etc. If you fit into this category, check with your doctor or dietitian before adjusting your eating schedule.

There are several populations who should proceed with caution and only fast under the direct supervision of their physician:

- People with gout
- People taking prescription medications
- Extremely lean individuals
- Diabetics (Type 1 or 2)

And there are some people who should NOT FAST:

- People with a history of eating disorders
- People who are malnourished and/or underweight
- Pregnant or breastfeeding women
- Children under the age of 18
- Those dealing with HPA Axis Dysregulation
- People who have recently undergone surgery
- People with mental health conditions
- People with conditions for which Warfarin is prescribed



# TOP TIPS FOR FASTING

# 1. Don't Overthink It

Stop wondering: "Can I fast 15 hours instead of 16?" or "what if I eat an apple during my fasted period, will that ruin everything?" Relax. Your body is a complex piece of machinery and learns to adapt. Everything is not as cut and dry as you think.

If you want to eat breakfast one day but not another, that's okay. If you are going for optimal aesthetic or athletic performance, I can see the need to be more rigid in your discipline, but otherwise relax and don't stress over tiny details.

# 2. Listen To Your Body

We are all different and will react differently from each other, and even from ourselves on a day to day basis. For example if you notice a significant drop in performance in your training, make sure you are eating enough calories during your eating window.

Fasting does not have to be a rigid thing that you do the same every day. In fact one of the benefits of fasting is that you become more adept at listening to your body. For example your week could look like this:

- Monday 16 hour fast
- Tuesday 16 hour fast
- Wednesday 12 hour fast (normal days eating)
- Thursday 18 hour fast
- Friday 16 hour fast
- Saturday 8 hour fast (party night)
- Sunday 16 hour fast

# 3. Stay Hydrated

Make sure you stay hydrated throughout the day. As a good practice, start every day with a full glass of water.

Add a squeeze of lemon or lime to flavor the water, if you wish. Alternatively, you can add some slices of orange or cucumber to a pitcher of water for an infusion of flavor, and then enjoy the water throughout the day.

Nb. Some people experience headaches when fasting and it's believed that they're caused by the transition from a relatively high-salt diet to very low salt intake on fasting days. Headaches are usually temporary, and as you become accustomed to fasting, this problem often resolves itself. In the meantime, add some extra salt to meals or drink mineral water.



#### 4. Stay Busy

If you are just sitting around thinking about how hungry you are, you'll be more likely to struggle with this. For that reason, time your fasting periods for maximum efficiency and minimal discomfort:

8pm: Your fast begins after eating a good dinner in the evening. 10pm - 7am: When you're sleeping that's another 9 hours of fasting ticked off. 7am - 12pm: When you wake up, 11 hours of fasting is already done. You can then spend 5 hours doing your best, most focused work.

#### 5. Expect Questions

You will often get weird looks from those around you when fasting comes up...embrace it.

It can be tough trying to try new things, especially when you are being questioned on your decisions by all of those around you. Fasting seems to be the one that really evokes a reaction. If someone questions you about ordering a veggie dish a simple answer about health or ethics is taken as normal these days. But fasting still gets the 3rd degree.

Depending on the person, sometimes the most effective approach is to flip the question and ask why they eat 3 meals plus snacks a day at the times they do? Have they ever actually thought about it or questioned it?

What about cultures around the world that don't eat that way? Have they themselves experimented with any of those to see how it affects their health?

Hopefully once you explain what you're doing they will be supportive.

#### 6. To Coffee Or Not To Coffee

If you want to drink water, black coffee, or tea during your fasted period, that's okay. Remember, don't overthink it – keep things simple! Dr. Rhonda Patrick over at FoundMyFitness believes that a fast should stop at the first consumption of anything other than water, so experiment yourself and see how your body responds.

If you want to put milk in your coffee, or drink diet soda occasionally while fasting, nobody is going to stop you. Remember, we're going for consistency and habit-building here – if milk or cream in your coffee makes life worth living, don't deprive yourself.

There are MUCH bigger fish to fry with regards to getting healthy than a few calories here and there during a fast. 80% adherence that you stick with for a year is better than 100% adherence that you abandon after a month because it was too restrictive.

If you're trying to get to a minimum body fat percentage, you'll need to be more strict – until then, however, do what allows you to stay compliant!

#### 7. Ride The Waves

Hunger comes in waves; it is not continuous. When it hits, slowly drink a glass of water or a hot cup of coffee. Often by the time you've finished, your hunger will have passed. Teas are also excellent, including green, black, oolong and herbal. And teas can often be blended together for variety, and can be enjoyed hot or cold.

#### 8. Break Your Fast Gently

There is no need to go crazy after a fast.

The best advice is to choose foods that aren't sweet and will satisfy you e.g. a balanced meal packed with veggies, fat and protein. If you break it with crisps and choc or tasty things it is very easy to go crazy and eat a lot of them.

#### 9. Fit It Into Your Life

Do not limit yourself socially because you're fasting. Arrange your fasting schedule so that it fits in with your lifestyle. There will be times during which it's impossible to fast: vacation, holidays, weddings. Do not try to force fasting into these celebrations.

These occasions are times to relax and enjoy. Afterwards, however, you can simply increase your fasting to compensate. Or just resume your regular fasting schedule. Adjust your fasting schedule to what makes sense for your lifestyle.

#### 10. Give Yourself Time

It takes time for your body to get used to fasting. The first few times you fast may be difficult, so be prepared. Don't be discouraged. It will get easier.

#### SUMMARY

Fasting is not a cure all, it is another tool that you can use on your journey to better health and performance, and is just one part of the puzzle. It is not an excuse to eat badly, and as always, the quality of your nutrition is paramount.

You also need to make sure that you are eating the right amount of good quality food to support your goals. If that means you need a longer eating window to fit all of your meals in then adapt it to meet that need.

As with most things health related fasting requires a degree of self experimentation to find out what works for you. We all have different genetics, lifestyles and goals and a 'one size fits all' simply does not exist.



#### HOW TO GET STARTED

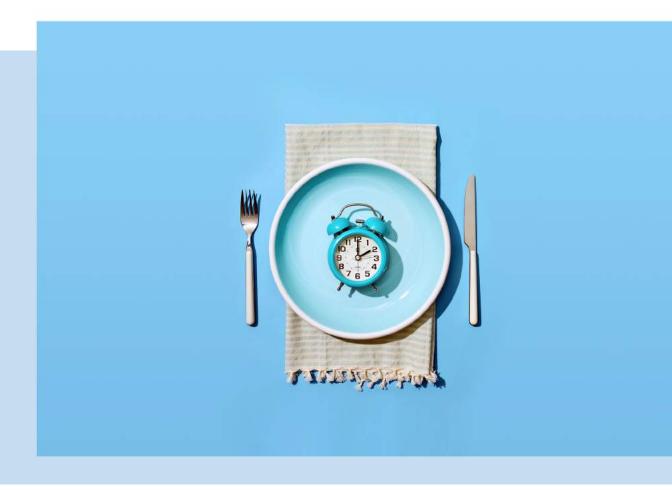
We recommend using the 16/8 method as the best way to try out fasting BUT we also recommend that you ease into it rather than jumping straight into a 16 hour fast.

#### 5 Weeks To 16/8

Week 1: 12/12 - Fast for 12 hours and consume all of your food in a 12 hour window.
Week 2: 13/11 - Fast for 13 hours and consume all of your food in a 11 hour window.
Week 3: 14/10 - Fast for 14 hours and consume all of your food in a 10 hour window.
Nb. Many women find 14/10 to be a better ratio than 16/8.

Week 4: 15/9 - Fast for 15 hours and consume all of your food in a 9 hour window. Week 5: 16/8 - Fast for 16 hours and consume all of your food in a 8 hour window.

You can use our Fasting Tracker to help stay consistent with this (next page).

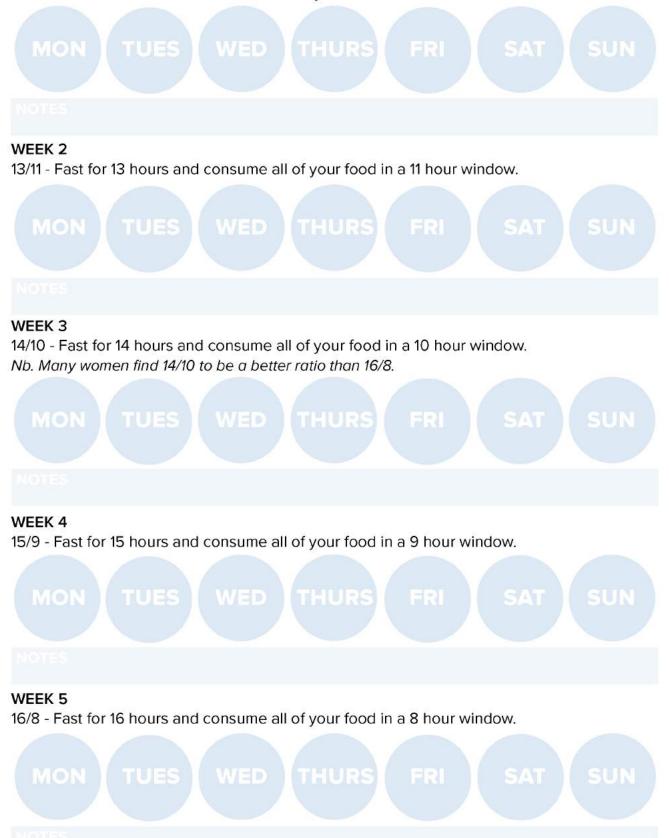




# FASTING TRACKER

#### WEEK 1

12/12 - Fast for 12 hours and consume all of your food in a 12 hour window.



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