

THE NATURAL EDGE



FASTING GUIDE

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.

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.

FASTING TRACKER

WEEK 1

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

MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT	SUN
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WEEK 2

13/11 - Fast for 13 hours and consume all of your food in a 11 hour window.

MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT	SUN
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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.

MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT	SUN
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WEEK 4

15/9 - Fast for 15 hours and consume all of your food in a 9 hour window.

MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT	SUN
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WEEK 5

16/8 - Fast for 16 hours and consume all of your food in a 8 hour window.

MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT	SUN
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