

- **What is Intermittent Fasting (IF)?** It involves spacing out periods of regular eating and periods of fasting. Some say it's the key to lasting weight loss, metabolic health, and a longer life.
- **How is IF beneficial?** Periods of fasting produce a net calorie deficit so therefore you lose weight. It has been proven to inflammation, lower cholesterol, lower blood pressure, and lowers glucose.
- **How does IF work?** Dr. Mark Mattson, Ph.D. and neuroscientist with Johns Hopkins Hospital has been studying intermittent fasting for 25+ years. He states, "Our bodies have evolved to go long periods without eating even a day or so." Our lives have changed in the last 50 years, when we didn't have internet or computers and TV programming turned off at night, so we went to bed and quit eating. However, now people are up all hours of the day watching TV and using the internet and when we do that, out of habit, we probably snack. People are not outside, and kids aren't out playing, therefore in general they don't get as much exercise.

Mattson says that after hours without food, the body exhausts its sugar stored and starts burning fat. He refers to this as *metabolic switching*.

"Intermittent fasting contrasts with the normal eating pattern for most Americans, who eat throughout their waking hours," Mattson says. "If someone is eating three meals a day, plus snacks, and they're not exercising, so every time they eat, they're running on those calories and not burning their fat stored."

Intermittent fasting works by prolonging the period when your body has burned through the calories consumed during your last meal and begins burning fat.

- **How do you start Intermittent Fasting?** It is important to check with your doctor before starting IF. It is not for everyone, especially those that have some blood sugar issues. Once you have studied the types of IF plans, chose one and start. Don't be surprised if it takes a few weeks to get accustomed to it. You will have periods of crankiness, periods of being tired, and headaches. Your body will have to adjust to not having food to burn. There are several different plans to choose from.

- **What are the types of plans for IF?**

1. The 16/8 plan. You will eat over an 8 hour period of your choosing. During your non-eating window, you can have water and any zero-calorie beverage of your choice, such as black coffee or tea. For instance you may choose to eat from 8:00 am to 4:00 pm, and then fast for the remainder of the day.
2. The 18/6 plan. You will eat over a 6 hour window and fast for 18 hours. Same thing applies on this plan you can have water and any zero calorie beverage of your choice, such as black coffee or tea. For instance you may choose to eat from 9:00 am until 3:00 pm.
3. The 5:2 plan. On this plan you will eat normal for five days out of the week and then you will take two days out of the week and consume 500-600 calories. With this plan it is important to not do the two days consecutively; for instance, do this on Tuesday and Thursday. On the two days that you are restricting your calorie intake it is important to eat healthy such as lean meats, fruits and vegetables and get as much protein as you can; that will help with the feeling of hunger. As stated, before you start such a plan it is important to converse with your doctor.
4. The 20/4 plan. This plan is not for everyone. It is important to discuss with your doctor before starting this plan. This is where you will fast for 20 hours and eat over a four-hour window.
5. The 24 hour plan. This plan is important to discuss with your doctor before starting, as well. On this plan you will go from breakfast to breakfast or lunch to lunch, so you will be eating and consuming calories each day you will just be going 24 hours between each meal.

- **Who shouldn't try IF?** Not everyone should try IF. Be sure to check with your physician before starting IF. People who are pregnant or trying to become pregnant, people who are taking diabetic medication (blood sugar can drop in the absence of food), or anyone taking several medications (lack of food can affect absorption and dosage. Also, if you have a history of eating disorders, prolonged periods of not eating can cause you to relapse.

- **What can I eat while Intermittent Fasting?** You can't go crazy while doing IF and eat a lot of junk food during your eating periods. It is very important to maintain a healthy diet consisting of lean meats, protein, leafy greens, fruit, vegetables, fiber and unrefined carbohydrates. You can't pack your day full of fried and processed foods and expect to benefit from it.

- **What are some Intermittent Fasting benefits?** Mattson explains, “When changes occur with this metabolic switch, it affects the body and brain.” Here are some intermittent fasting benefits research has revealed so far:

1. Thinking and memory.
2. Heart health.
3. Blood pressure.
4. Resting heart rate.
5. Physical performance.
6. Diabetes and obesity.
7. Tissue health.
8. Overall general better feeling.

**Overall, there are proven benefits from Intermittent Fasting. Just find a plan that works for you and stick with it. You may need to try several of the plans to find out which one works for you. Also, please remember “HANGER” is real and it will take some getting used to.**

Suggested Readings available at OPL:

**Stephens, Gin**

**Fast. Feast. Repeat. : The Comprehensive Guide to Delay, Don't Deny® Intermittent Fasting / Gin Stephens. -- First Edition -- New York : St. Martin's Griffin, 2020**

**Colbert, Don**

**Dr. Colbert's Fasting Zone / by Don Colbert, MD. -- Lake Mary, FL : Siloam, 2020**

**Boyers, Lindsay**

**The Everything Guide to Intermittent Fasting : Learn How to Lose Weight and Heal Your Body By Controlling When and What You Eat / Lindsay Boyers. -- New York : Adams Media, 2018**

**Mercola, Joseph**

**KetoFast Cookbook : Recipes for Intermittent Fasting and Timed Ketogenic Meals from a World-Class Doctor and an Internationally Renowned Chef / Dr. Joseph Mercola and Pete Evans. -- Carlsbad, California : Hay House, Inc., 2019**