Intermittent Fasting: A Trend or an Efficient Method to Lose Weight?

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Introduction

Dietary fads that don't seem to be going away anytime soon include intermittent fasting (IF) [1]. It's when you voluntarily abstain from food and beverages other than water for a set amount of time. While some individuals fast for health-related reasons, others fast for spiritual reasons [2,3].

On overweight rats, numerous very promising research on IF have been carried out [4]. They experience a drop in their weight, blood pressure, cholesterol, and blood sugar. But they're rats. IF has been shown to be safe and successful in nearly a dozen human studies, though not much more so than any other diet [5]. In addition, many people find it difficult to fast.

However, an increasing amount of evidence indicates that the timing of the fast is crucial and can help make IF a more practical, longlasting, and successful strategy for both diabetes prevention and weight loss [6].

Weight loss can be aided by intermittent fasting

IF seems to make sense. Enzymes in our stomach break down the food we eat, resulting in chemicals entering our bloodstream [7]. Our cells swiftly convert carbohydrates-especially sugars and refined grains like rice and white flour-into sugar, which is what gives us energy [8]. We keep it in our fat cells as well, because our cells don't use it completely up [9]. But insulin, a hormone produced in the pancreas, is necessary for sugar to enter our cells. Sugar enters and remains in fat cells thanks to insulin.

Several studies in humans comparing fasting every other day with eating less every day found that both had similar weight loss effects, even if people had difficulty tolerating fasting days [10-12]. So, choosing a low-calorie, plant-based, Mediterranean-style diet makes sense [13]. But research shows that not all IF approaches are created equal and that some IF diets are actually effective and sustainable, especially when combined with a nutrient-rich plant-based diet [14,15].

We evolved to be in tune with the day/night cycle, our circadian rhythm [16]. Our metabolism has adapted to eating during the day and sleeping at night. Nighttime eating is well associated with a higher risk of obesity, as well as diabetes.

Therefore, even for those who gain weight, just moving around the schedule of meals, eating later in the day, and prolonging the overnight fast has a major positive impact on metabolism.

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Why might changing the time help?

But why does simply changing the timing of meals to allow for fasting make a difference in our bodies? An in-depth review of IF science recently published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* provides some insights [17]. Fasting is gradually integrated into our physiology, activating several essential cellular functions. Switching from a fed state to a fasted state not only helps us burn calories and lose weight. The benefits of simple fasting, which include lowering blood sugar levels, improving metabolism, reducing inflammation, and even helping to eliminate toxins and damaged cells to improve brain function and reduce the risk of cancer, were explained by researchers after reviewing dozens of studies on both humans and animals.

So, is intermittent fasting as effective as people think?

Patients are frequently advised to count calories when attempting to reduce weight, but this can be laborious and difficult to maintain. Intermittent fasting has been found to be equally beneficial.

So, here's the deal. There is strong scientific evidence that biological fasting, when paired with an adequate diet and lifestyle, can be an especially successful weight-loss strategy, especially for those who are at risk of developing diabetes. However, this food should not be consumed on intermittent fasting regimens unless under the close supervision of a physician capable of monitoring them. People with advanced diabetes or taking diabetes medication, people with a history of eating disorders such as bulimia and anorexia, and pregnant or breastfeeding women should not eat this food.

Avert refined grains and sugar. Eat a sensible, plant-based, Mediterranean-style diet that consists of fruits, vegetables, beans, lentils, whole grains, lean proteins, and healthy fats instead.

Allow fat in your body to burn between meals. Avoid snacking. Keep moving throughout the day. Develop muscular tone.

Think about a basic type of sporadic fasting. Eat only during certain hours of the day, and if possible, try to eat earlier in the day (between 7 am and 3 pm, or even 10 am to 6 pm), but never right before bed.

Steer clear of eating or snacking at night all the time.

Discussion

A diet plan known as intermittent fasting alternates between short intervals of important calorie restriction or no food and intervals of unrestricted eating. It is advocated to improve health markers linked to disease, such as blood pressure and cholesterol levels, and to alter body composition by reducing weight and fat mass. Its origins are in the practice of traditional fasting, which is an ancient ritual recommended by Socrates, Plato, and religious organizations for one's health or spiritual well-being [18]. A typical fast consists of a continuous abstinence from food and liquids for anywhere from 12 hours to a month. It might permit a smaller quantity of food and drink, or it might call for total abstinence.

Extended periods of extremely low-calorie diets might result in physiological alterations that could lead the body to adjust to the calorie restriction and impede additional weight loss. To address this problem, intermittent fasting switches up times when a person consumes fewer calories with meals that are routine, which may prevent these changes in metabolism [19]. Research, nevertheless, has not consistently shown that intermittent fasting is a more successful weight loss approach than consistent low-calorie diets [20].

Although studies on animals have demonstrated some benefits associated with calorie restriction, there are no benefits comparable to those of intermittent fasting in human subjects [19]. Regarding biological changes, compliance rates, appetite suppression, and weight loss

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amounts, it's unclear if intermittent fasting is better than other weight loss techniques. It may be easier for some people to follow this kind of schedule than for others, especially if they usually only eat one or two meals a day or go for extended periods of time without eating. A cutoff time for eating may also be beneficial for those who overeat or snack at night, particularly if the late eating causes uncomfortable side effects like reflux or restless nights.

Additional high-quality research, such as randomized controlled trials with follow-up longer than a year, is required to demonstrate a direct effect and potential advantages of intermittent fasting. It is currently not possible to make firm recommendations regarding intermittent fasting for weight loss.

Disclosure Statement

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest.

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