

INTERMITTENT FASTING IS JUST ANOTHER FAD DIET!



WHAT IS INTERMITTENT FASTING?

Intermittent fasting (IF) is an eating pattern in which you cycle between periods of eating and fasting. Unlike traditional diets that focus on restricting calories or eliminating food groups, IF, also known as Time-Restricted Eating, focuses on when you eat rather than what you eat. Plain coffee, tea, or water is acceptable. This is not total religious fasting, which prohibits liquids in a time period. Instead of constantly fuelling your body and keeping your digestive system working throughout your waking hours, intermittent fasting allows your digestive system to rest and may support gut lining health. During the fasting period, the body gradually shifts from using glucose (sugar) as its primary source of energy. This natural process known as metabolic switching is one of the reasons intermittent fasting has become a major focus of scientific research. Modern farming and industrialization have shifted human's dietary patterns. Around 14 hours into a fasting period, many people begin transitioning toward ketosis; a metabolic state in which the body increasingly relies on ketones produced from stored fat for energy instead of glucose or stored glycogen. The exact timing varies depending on an individual's diet, activity level, and metabolism.

Longer fasting windows may provide additional benefits associated with deeper ketosis and autophagy; a cellular process that helps remove damaged components and supports cellular renewal. However, fasts lasting 24 hours or longer may have potential drawbacks, including increased muscle catabolism, elevated cortisol levels, and possible electrolyte imbalances.

BEYOND WEIGHT LOSS: YOUR GUT HEALTH CONNECTION

Research suggests that fasting periods may provide the digestive system with time to rest and may support gut health by reducing digestive workload and activating the Migrating Motor Complex (MMC), often described as the gut's natural housekeeping system. The MMC helps move residual food particles and bacteria through the digestive tract, supporting normal intestinal function. Fasting may also influence the gut microbiome by supporting microbial diversity and may stimulate autophagy; a natural cellular process involved in removing damaged cellular components and maintaining cellular health. While more human research is needed, emerging evidence suggests that intermittent fasting may have benefits beyond metabolism, potentially supporting digestive and overall health.

You have probably heard this statement before. But is it really true?

While intermittent fasting also known as Time-Restricted eating has gained popularity in recent years, it is far more than a passing trend. After all, our hunter-gatherer ancestors lived this way almost continuously.

Unlike modern diets that focus on what you eat, Intermittent Fasting (IF) also known as Time-Restricted Eating (TRE) focuses on when you eat.

Growing scientific evidence suggests that IF may support weight management, metabolic health, gut health, cardiovascular health, and healthy aging when practiced correctly.

COMMON METHODS OF INTERMITTENT FASTING

- 16:8 Method: Fast for 16 hours and eat within an 8-hour window.
- 14:10 Method: Fast for 14 hours and eat within a 10-hour window.
- 5:2 Method: Eat normally for five days a week and reduce calorie intake on two non-consecutive days.

The best method is the one that comfortably fits your lifestyle and can be maintained to achieve desired benefits, whether supporting insulin sensitivity, calorie management, or gut health and cellular maintenance.



Cardiologist Dr. Pradip Jamnadas emphasizes the important relationship between gut health and cardiovascular health. He describes the gut lining as a protective barrier, similar to a garden wall. When this barrier becomes compromised, increased intestinal permeability (often referred to as “leaky gut”) may occur, potentially allowing unwanted substances to enter the bloodstream and contribute to body inflammation.

Giving the digestive system regular periods of rest through intermittent fasting may help support the maintenance of this protective barrier, particularly when combined with anti-inflammatory, nutrient-rich, and high-fiber foods outside IF windows.

EXERCISING WHILE FASTING

Intermittent fasting is not only about when you eat but, it also impacts how you exercise. Low- to moderate-intensity activities such as walking, cycling, rowing, yoga or bodyweight exercises are generally tolerated in a fasted state. However, high-intensity workouts or heavy resistance training may increase muscle breakdown (catabolism) if performed without sufficient glycogen stores.

As David E. Frost explains in Strong to Save:

“I do not lift heavy in a fasted state. I often do bodyweight exercises when fasted and invest these workout times to build stability, flexibility, and steady-state stamina”. He shares that he experiences the benefits of intermittent fasting even when practicing it only a few days per week. Frost offers this four-legged stool as a lifestyle sustenance model:

1. **Regularly Compress Your Eating Window → Encourages metabolic switching and supports healthier insulin regulation.**
2. **Prioritize Protein and Fiber → Promote natural gut satiety hormones, such as GLP-1, and support appetite regulation.**
3. **Eliminate Combustion Foods → Avoid combinations of high-glycemic-index (GI) carbohydrates and fats**
4. **Earn Your Fuel → Pair carbohydrate intake with physical activity to support energy balance and metabolic health.**

For adults over 40, preserving muscle mass is generally as important as reducing excess white body fat. Matching workout volume and intensity to your chosen fasting schedule can help maximize potential benefits while protecting muscle mass, strength, and overall function. In KABOOMER, David E. Frost reminds us that healthy aging is built through consistent lifestyle habits rather than one single strategy. As he writes:

“Regular endurance and strength activities can slow biological aging or senescence. Intermittent fasting works best when combined with tailored physical activity, balanced nutrition, quality sleep, and effective stress management.”

MINDFUL EATING

Intermittent fasting is not about starving yourself or skipping nutrition. Your viable goal is to eat balanced, nutrient-rich meals that include lean protein, healthy fats, fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and fiber during your eating window. I don’t suggest that you replicate a hunter-gatherer diet which was often harsh and dictated by local survival, but to recreate healthy biological signals our bodies evolved to expect.

BREAKING YOUR FAST

How you break your fast is just as important as the fast itself. Breaking a fast with sugary or highly processed foods may reduce many of the digestive benefits of fasting . Instead, choose whole foods, include protein and healthy fats, and stay well hydrated. There is a higher danger of compensatory over-eating or cortisol spikes with longer fasting periods. Take note that high-fat + high-carb combos (donuts, pizza, fries, pastries) can override your natural satiety signals when you break your fast.

INTERMITTENT FASTING AND SLEEP

Researchers are also exploring the connection between intermittent fasting and sleep. Emerging evidence suggests that eating in alignment with the body’s natural circadian rhythm may improve sleep quality, hormone regulation, recovery, and overall well-being. Since restorative sleep plays a critical role in metabolism, happy hormone production, immune function and healthy aging, this is an exciting area of ongoing research.



While more long-term human studies are needed, early findings suggest that the benefits of intermittent fasting may extend beyond weight management.

WHO CAN DO INTERMITTENT FASTING?

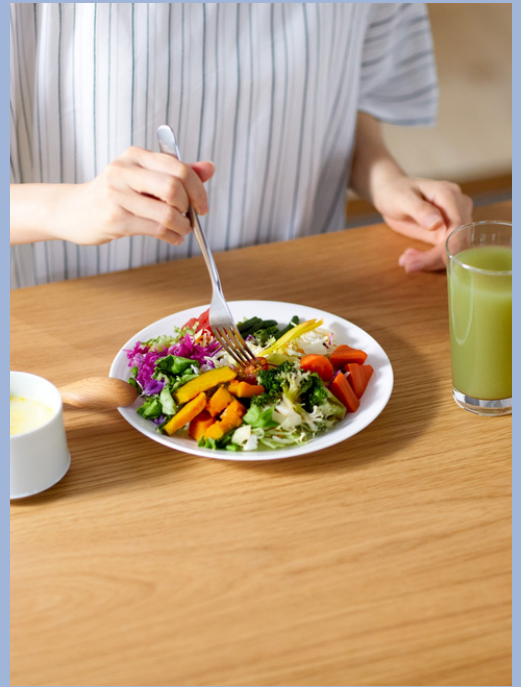
Intermittent fasting aka Time restricted eating can be a safe and effective approach for many healthy adults who want to improve metabolic health, support healthy aging or manage their weight. However, it is not suitable for everyone.

It is generally not recommended for:

- Pregnant or breastfeeding women
- Children and adolescents
- Individuals with a history of eating disorders
- People who are underweight or malnourished
- Individuals with certain medical conditions unless advised by their healthcare provider

If you are new to intermittent fasting, start gradually and listen to your body.

If you are unsure or have any doubts about adopting this lifestyle, consult a healthcare professional.



SCIENCE-BACKED EVIDENCE

Scientific research supports many health benefits associated with intermittent fasting.

A 2024 umbrella review published in E Clinica Medicine found that intermittent fasting can improve body weight, insulin sensitivity, blood sugar control and several cardiovascular risk factors. Another 2024 umbrella review published in BMC Medicine reported improvements in metabolic health across different fasting methods, with alternate-day fasting showing particularly promising results.

Similarly, a 2025 systematic review and network meta-analysis published in The BMJ involving more than 6,500 adults, concluded that intermittent fasting is as effective as traditional calorie restriction for weight loss and improving cardiometabolic health.

Research also suggests that intermittent fasting may:

- Support healthy weight management
- Improve insulin sensitivity
- Promote autophagy and cellular repair
- Reduce inflammation
- Improve heart health
- Support brain function
- Enhance gut health
- Support healthy sleep patterns

While these findings are encouraging, more long-term human studies are needed.



THE BOTTOM LINE

Healthspan is not built or extended by a single meal or a single fast. It is shaped by the habits we practice consistently.

Intermittent fasting is not a miracle cure and it doesn't suggest that we don't wear loincloths when hunting for dinner, but it is a science-backed lifestyle tool that can support your metabolic health, gut health, cardiovascular health, better sleep, and healthy aging when combined with balanced nutrition and regular exercise.

The best health plan is not the most restrictive but the one you can follow consistently for life.