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# Intermittent Fasting

*Intermittent fasting (IF) is a broad term that means cycling between periods of restricting calories and periods of not restricting calories. While fasting, you may either avoid all foods and beverages with calories or greatly limit your calorie intake. The time period of complete fasting or significant calorie restriction is generally between 12 to 48 hours.*

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## Types of Intermittent Fasting

There are many types of intermittent fasting. Some of the more common approaches are defined here:

- **Time-restricted eating (TRE)** means you only eat during a set window of time, which may range anywhere from 4 to 12 hours. This is also called **prolonged nightly fasting** and extends a person's typical overnight fast. For example, you might only eat between 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., which is often called a 16:8 plan. This means 16 hours of fasting and an 8-hour eating window. The length of the eating window and where it is placed during the day can vary. The amount of food or calories and the number of meals you can have during the eating window are generally not restricted.
- **Alternate-day fasting (ADF)**, also called **fasting intervals**, means a cycle of fasting on one day and then normal food intake the next day. You only consume water and electrolytes on fasting days. Alternate-day fasting can also mean fasting every third day or on a more personalized schedule that works for you.
- **Intermittent energy restriction (IER)** or **modified fasting** means switching between days of eating a very low-calorie diet and normal calorie intake. The days you restrict calories may either be in a row or split up during the week. Two examples of this type of fasting are:
  - **Modified alternate-day fasting.** This is like alternate-day fasting, except you can eat up to 600 calories or 25% of your daily calorie needs on the days you fast. For example, if you need 2,000 calories daily to maintain your weight, you'd only eat 500 calories (25% of your needs) on days of fasting.
  - **5:2 method.** This means that on two days of the week, you have a very low-calorie intake (no more than 25% of your daily calorie needs). On the other five days, you have a normal calorie intake.

### *Who Benefits from Intermittent Fasting?*

Work with your healthcare practitioner to find out if fasting is right for you and the best type of fasting for your needs. Studies suggest fasting may improve insulin resistance, blood sugar, blood pressure, inflammation, short-term weight loss, and brain health. Longer-term studies are needed to confirm fasting helps weight control and other aspects of health over time.

#### *Fasting may improve:*

- Blood pressure
- Antioxidant activity
- Insulin effectiveness
- Brain function

#### *Fasting may decrease:*

- Blood sugar
- Free radicals (damaging molecules)
- Inflammation
- Triglycerides

### *Who Should Not Fast or Should Fast With Extra Caution?*

Fasting is not advised for children or if you are frail, underweight, pregnant, trying to become pregnant, or breastfeeding. Individuals with an eating disorder or disordered eating pattern should not fast. Those with an irregular heartbeat, low blood pressure, or extreme fatigue should also avoid fasting.

In general, if you have a health condition, you should first discuss the risks versus the potential benefits of fasting with your functional medicine practitioner. Special caution is needed if you have diabetes, metabolic syndrome, or symptoms related to unbalanced blood sugar. You would need to work with a healthcare practitioner with expertise in fasting and adjusting medications to account for changes in your eating and body weight.

### *General Advice for Intermittent Fasting*

- Drink plenty of filtered water on fasting days. Your functional medicine practitioner may also recommend electrolytes or other supplements personalized for you.
- Avoid high-intensity exercise while fasting. Walking, yoga, or other light-to-moderate intensity activity are OK.
- Be aware of your movement and balance. You may feel dizzy or lightheaded, especially when first starting a fast.
- Eat mostly whole, unprocessed, nutrient-rich foods since you won't be eating much on fasting days.
- Stop fasting if you feel unwell and call your functional medicine provider.

## Personalized Plan for Intermittent Fasting

### Intermittent Fasting Options:

Time-restricted eating:

Fast \_\_\_\_\_ hours per day between the hours of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

One-day fast (24 hours), weekly

Alternate-day fasting

Modified alternate-day fasting\*

5:2 method\*

\*Up to 600 calories on fasting days. A sample food plan is in the next section.

How often you'll fast: \_\_\_\_\_ times per week for \_\_\_\_\_ weeks.

### Supplement Recommendations:

Multivitamin

Multimineral

Electrolytes (calcium, magnesium, sodium, potassium, chloride)

This plan should be followed under the supervision and guidance of a qualified healthcare professional.

For nutrient-rich recipes, please see IFM's [Mito Food Plan - Weekly Planner and Recipes](#). You could use the lower-calorie recipes in 600-calorie food plans on fasting days. You can enjoy the other recipes during non-fasting times.

### Sample 600-Calorie Food Plan (for Fasting Days)

- **Breakfast:** One scrambled egg with a cup of spinach sautéed in a small amount of chicken broth. Top with a fourth of a fresh avocado and a pinch of sea salt and pepper.
- **Lunch:** 2 or 3 ounces of cooked turkey or chicken served on 2 cups of mixed baby greens. Drizzle with the juice of half a lemon and 1 teaspoon olive oil. Sprinkle with a pinch of sea salt and cracked pepper.
- **Dinner:** 2 or 3 ounces poached or broiled salmon and a cup of steamed broccoli drizzled with ½ teaspoon olive oil and the juice of half a lemon or lime. Sprinkle with a pinch of sea salt and fresh herbs of choice.

### REFERENCES

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