



Intermittent Fasting: The Science Behind the Trend

A recent nutrition trend has been intermittent fasting. But what is it? And how can it affect your health? Read on to find out.

Intermittent fasting is where you cycle through a period of eating and fasting. It is focused on the timing of eating. Here are some examples of intermittent fasting

- **The 16/8 Method:** Fast for 16 hours each day, for example by only eating between noon and 8pm.
- **Eat-Stop-Eat:** Once or twice a week, don't eat anything from dinner one day, until dinner the next day (a 24 hour fast).
- **The 5:2 Diet:** During 2 days of the week, eat only about 500–600 calories

The goal with intermittent fasting is to help with weight loss. Here's the idea behind it. When you eat food, there are enzymes that breakdown the food into smaller particles which eventually end up as molecules in the blood stream. Carbohydrates such as grains or sugars are broken down to be used by our cells for energy. If our cells don't use this energy, then it becomes stored as fat. Another component of this process is insulin. Insulin brings sugar into the fat cells and keeps it there.

When we're not eating, our insulin levels decrease which results in fat cells releasing stored sugar to use as energy. Weight loss can happen when insulin levels go down. The entire idea of intermittent fasting is to allow the insulin levels to go down far enough and for long enough to burn off our fat.

Does the research back it up? Since intermittent fasting is still new as a weight loss trend, there are limited studies done on humans to prove the benefits. However, there have been multiple studies done on rats which show improvements in weight, cholesterol, blood sugar, and blood pressure. The few studies done in humans, show that intermittent fasting may not be any more effective than other diets.

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The good news is, it may help with weight loss if done safely and effectively. Oftentimes with fasting, people end up also restricting the amount of calories they take in. Because of this, there is more research needed to determine if intermittent fasting is effective because of the change in metabolic activity or is simply related to a total reduction in calories. Either way, if you are interested in trying to change your eating habits with an effort to lose weight, intermittent fasting could be helpful.

Since intermittent fasting is considered a diet, it is something you should discuss with a doctor or nutritionist before trying on your own. People with certain health issues or diseases may not be able to partake in intermittent fasting. If you are looking for more information, check out the resources below.



References:

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