

4.12 Intermittent Fasting

Your eating schedule can significantly influence your health.

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One reason you may struggle to lose weight is the timing of your meals. There is promising evidence that fasting, especially at certain times of the day, is healthy and assists the body in burning fat, whereas eating at the wrong times can encourage the body to retain fat. You may find that restricting the hours during which you eat can boost your metabolism and help you lose weight more easily.

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- Has the potential to catalyze weight loss and improve body composition.
- Many people who fast report sleeping better and feeling more rested.
- Can reduce overall caloric intake.

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- Requires a lot of willpower at first, as you get used to a new routine.
- Might conflict with the eating schedules of those close to you.

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The idea behind intermittent fasting is to give your body a window of time each day to eat and digest food and another window in which you avoid eating. Some people choose to eat during a six-hour window and fast the remaining eighteen hours, while others prefer an eight-hour or twelve-hour eating window, fasting for the rest of the day (these different styles are referred to as 6-18, 8-16, etc.). During the avoidance window, the goal is usually to resist consuming anything at all, not even a crumb, to keep the digestive system completely food-free. Adherents believe that this produces numerous benefits, such as increased autophagy—a process of cell renewal. However, if you can't or won't avoid eating completely for most of the day, that's okay—even reducing food intake for longer periods of time is beneficial.

If this approach seems a little too restrictive for you, you could try a lightweight version: Simply pick a period of time before bed—say three hours—and stop eating at the designated time. This can make it surprisingly easy to fast. For example, if you stop eating at 8 p.m., go to bed at 11 p.m., and eat breakfast at 8 a.m. the next morning, you will automatically fast for twelve hours.

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1. "Intermittent Fasting: What is it, and how does it work?":
<https://hopkinsmedicine.org/health/wellness-and-prevention/intermittent-fasting-what-is-it-and-how-does-it-work>
2. "Intermittent Fasting 101—The Ultimate Beginner's Guide":
<https://healthline.com/nutrition/intermittent-fasting-guide#effects>

