

Timing of intermittent fasting

Q. Is it okay to adjust the hours I fast, such as for an occasional social event or to mix it up, and will it still be effective?

A. There are a variety of ways one can practice intermittent fasting and this webinar focused specifically on time-restricted eating (or part-day). Studies show that max benefits are attained within a fasted state of 12-16 hours and that whether following this method most days of the week or even just a couple of days starting out, both prove to be effective. The easiest way to incorporate a fasting window is to include the time that you are sleeping.

Q. Is it okay to practice intermittent fasting (IF) long-term?

A. If considering time-restricted eating or another version of intermittent fasting, it is advised that you first speak with your primary care physician as they know your health history and can help provide guidance tailored to your needs.

Q. Could you explain about the twice a week fasting?

A. The webinar specifically focused on a type of intermittent fasting known as time-restricted eating (or part-day). It is shorter in duration but still shown to be effective. Here are a few resources for the 5:2 plan:

- <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/324303>
- <https://www.webmd.com/diet/a-z/fast-diet-review>

Ideal foods and intermittent fasting

Q. When breaking a fast, what are the best foods to eat within the first few hours?

A. It is important to aim for healthier eating in general. Whether IF or not, consider ways you can be more intentional with the food you consume throughout the day. That means, increasing fruits and vegetables, fiber, lean protein and dairy, and plant-based fats. And, minimizing added sugars, refined grains and highly processed foods. The Mediterranean diet is a great framework for this.

- <https://www.heart.org/en/healthy-living/healthy-eating/eat-smart/nutrition-basics/mediterranean-diet>
- <https://foodandnutrition.org/blogs/stone-soup/how-to-start-mediterranean-diet/>
- <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/healthy-weight/diet-reviews/mediterranean-diet/>

Exercise and intermittent fasting

Q. I exercise around 5 a.m., is this beneficial or detrimental to weight loss and a healthy lifestyle if I avoid eating from 7 p.m. to 11 a.m.?

A. There is conflicting research regarding the pros and cons of exercising while fasting. You will want to discuss this with your personal physician so they can ensure that your health history, medications, etc. are being considered.

- <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/intermittent-fasting-and-working-out#summary>

Shift work and intermittent fasting

Q. What about someone who works third shift?

A. Shift workers are not immune to misalignment in their circadian rhythm. They are at a greater risk for developing increased blood pressure, increased inflammatory markers and decreased glucose tolerance. The following information is from the American Academy of Sleep Medicine (2017) and National Sleep Foundation (2017):

- On average, shift workers sleep two to four hours less per 24-hour period than people with a traditional schedule.
- It may take up to three years to adjust to a shift work schedule, or one may never adjust. There are studies underway to test interventions to minimize adverse health consequences (e.g., meal timing).
- 10% of shift workers have shift work disorder. Symptoms include: excessive sleepiness, difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep, lack of energy, difficulty concentrating, headaches, poor mood and irritability.

Sleep health

Sleep health is critical. Take this self-test:

<http://sleepeducation.org/essentials-in-sleep/shift-work/self-test-diagnosis>

Assess your sleep hygiene with this questionnaire:

<https://www.sleepfoundation.org/articles/sleep-hygiene>

Some additional resources include:

<http://sleepeducation.org/essentials-in-sleep/shift-work>

<https://www.sleepfoundation.org/shift-work-disorder/tips/healthy-habits>

<https://www.sleepfoundation.org/shift-work-disorder/tips/coping-strategies>

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