



INTERMITTENT FASTING QUICK START:

How To Start Intermittent Fasting
in 5/7 Easy Steps

Introduction

You are probably reading this book because you're considering intermittent fasting to achieve your health goals. Or, you have heard the reports of how effective it can be for weight loss. You've heard others raving about the benefits of intermittent fasting and how it has changed their lives. More importantly, you're wondering, is intermittent fasting just another over-hyped fad? This book will answer all of your questions succinctly but thoroughly.

There's a lot of reliable information on intermittent fasting out there, most of it by nutrition experts and medical professionals. There are hundreds of blogs and testimonies from people who have tried it. There's also a large volume of research on the benefits of intermittent fasting with very positive findings.

This book will save you the trouble of reading through hundreds of websites and dozens of studies. It will condense the most relevant information, and proven tips. These are all of the key basics you need to know in order to make an informed decision about whether it's for you.

If you have already decided that you want to go for it, the five simple steps discussed here will help you jump-start your intermittent fasting plan and quickly integrate it into your lifestyle.

Lastly, this book will arm you with some valuable tips and recommendations to help your fasting routine go more smoothly – and help you get the most out of intermittent fasting.

Chapter 1: Why Fast Intermittently?

There are many reasons to consider intermittent fasting as a healthy lifestyle choice. The main reason is that it's not a traditional diet.

Whether your goal is to lose weight or simply boost your overall health and vitality, intermittent fasting does not restrict you to specific foods or involve calorie-counting. You simply abstain from eating during fasting hours and eat what you want during eating hours – within reason, of course!

It's this flexibility that makes intermittent fasting so popular and much easier to adopt as a lasting lifestyle habit.

Is Intermittent Fasting A Fad?

Absolutely not. All the evidence points to the fact that intermittent fasting is here to stay. It has become a lifestyle choice for hundreds of people, with many more coming on board

as research continues to discover and confirm its seemingly endless benefits.

Fasting has been practiced for centuries by various cultures worldwide for both health and spiritual benefits. It is only recently that it has become known in the West as a healthy lifestyle choice.

It's highly unlikely that the practice of intermittent fasting will go away anytime soon, especially as more and more health experts are acknowledging its benefits.

Whereas health experts had previously warned about the potential dangers of skipping meals, research findings and real-life examples have caused them to do a 180-degree turn. In fact, nutrition experts are so convinced of the benefits of intermittent fasting that they are now recommending it to clients who simply cannot stick to a traditional diet.

Benefits of Intermittent Fasting

The final deal-breaker is that study after study has proven the powerful and varied benefits of intermittent fasting. Over 75 years of scientific research has conclusively confirmed the following benefits:

- It improves metabolism.
- It reduces high blood pressure.
- It reduces cholesterol levels.
- It promotes longevity.
- It reduces oxidative stress.
- It improves mental function.
- It reduces the risk of age-related degenerative diseases like Parkinson's and Alzheimer's.
- It improves insulin sensitivity and can guard against diabetes.
- It reduces inflammation.
- It reduces the risk of cancer.

Who Intermittent Fasting Is Not For

Unfortunately, intermittent fasting is not for everyone. There are certain conditions where intermittent fasting can be harmful to

health. You absolutely must not fast, or at the very least consult a doctor if:

- You are pregnant.
- You are breastfeeding.
- You are anemic.
- You have a history of eating disorders.
- You have diabetes.
- You have a heart condition.
- You are under 18.
- You are on medications that must be taken during meals.

The bottom line is that the combined benefits of intermittent fasting can immensely improve your quality of life. And we can definitely expect more amazing breakthroughs as more research is conducted.

Before proceeding further, the traditional disclaimer must be made here: Although intermittent fasting is risk-free for normal, healthy individuals of both sexes, it is advisable to check with your doctor first.

Chapter 2: The Five Simple Steps

So, are you ready to quick-start your intermittent fasting program? All it requires is five simple steps.

Intermittent fasting requires no complicated preparations and it is practically cost-free (unless you choose to invest in supplements or special foods). All you need to do is quick-start your intermittent fasting routine with these five basic steps.

Step 1: Define your Goal

Some people incorrectly assume that the goal of intermittent fasting is to lose weight. But this is by no means the only goal. The first step is to define your personal health goal based on the following categories:

Weight Loss

If your primary goal is to shed those extra pounds, then you will have to watch what you eat more carefully than someone who's not looking to lose weight.

You need to keep a closer eye on your food intake - not necessarily restrict calories, but just consume less calorie-rich foods, avoid snacking between meals and perhaps cut out rich deserts. This will optimize your fasting and help you reach your weight loss goal much faster.

You may also consider adding a workout routine on non-fast days to tone your body as the pounds come off.

Improved Mental Health And Spirituality

Some people fast to improve their mental strength and promote spiritual traits like gratitude, humility, compassion, and learning to accept the simple things in life.

In this case, you would want to eat more "brain foods" to improve your mental focus and cognitive function. To promote spiritual

traits, you would perhaps prefer to focus on simple but nutritious meals and incorporate meditation into your fasting plan.

Overall Health And Wellbeing

Some people fast simply to reap all the benefits and to feel healthier and more energized. Fasting, in general, is a great detoxifier of the body and just leaves you looking better and feeling better. Some of the first benefits you will notice is improved complexion, healthier hair and nails, and calmer and more balanced digestion.

In this case, you can be more flexible with what you eat as long as you are focusing on good nutrition. You can also engage in a light outdoor exercise like walking or cycling or incorporate some other healthy exercise program into your lifestyle.

Step 2: Choose A Fasting Plan

There are a number of intermittent fasting plans and variations of them but the following three are the most popular and most commonly practiced:

- **The 16/8 method**

With this plan, you fast for a full 16 hours with an eating window of 8 hours every day. Veteran fasters recommend that you start your fast after dinner, around 8 or 9 pm, and break your fast the next day around noon or 1 pm.

You can see why this makes the best sense. You will be less likely to get hungry after a good dinner, while 7 or 8 hours will be taken up by sleep. Breaking your fast by noon or 1 pm the next day will feel like you are having a late breakfast or brunch. You also have room for a light meal or snack in the late afternoon, end your fasting window with a nutritious dinner and repeat the process.

It's recommended that you practice this method by alternating two fasting days in succession with two days where you eat normally. This means that at the end of the second day after dinner, you are free to eat normally for the next 48 hours. More

experienced fasters sometimes alternate three fasting days with three normal eating days.



Fluids like water, unsweetened coffee, tea or herbal tea are allowed during fasting hours and in fact, are highly recommended to keep your body hydrated.

If you're a beginner, this plan may seem overwhelming. If you do choose it, however, you can start with a shorter fasting window of 10 or 12 hours and slowly build up to the full 16 hours.

You can also consider playing around with the times that suit your lifestyle best. For example, if you are an early riser, you can

plan to break your fast at 10 am. In this case, your eating window would be until 6 pm. It's just a matter of experimenting a bit and finding the hours you are most comfortable with.

- **The 5:2 plan**

This plan is the closest to a traditional diet but very different at the same time.

The method requires you to eat normally for five days of the week then limit your calorie intake to 600 – 800 calories on the remaining two days.

You are not technically fasting on those two days but dividing 600 – 800 calories over three meals will mean you are drastically limiting your food intake.

Again, no super-restrictive calorie counting is required. Anyone can stay within the required range by using a simple calorie counting app, as well as focusing on low-calorie veggies and fruits on the two "fasting" days.

Again, which days you fast are totally up to you. Some people prefer to have their fast days back to back, for example, Saturday and Sunday. Others prefer to space them out over the week, such as Monday and Thursday. There's no fixed rule here. You decide what works best for your lifestyle and schedule.

The real challenge with this plan is dividing the low-calorie intake over your meals. It would mean consuming an average of 200 per meal, which is quite low. Some fasters cut out proteins and carbs on these days and fill up on vegetables and fruits. However, with a little creativity, you can add more variety and eat pretty well on these two days. Check out some great 600 – 800-calorie meal plans here:

<https://www.weightlossresources.co.uk/diet/plans/5-2-diet-7-day-meal-plan.htm>

- **The Eat-Stop-Eat Plan**

The rules of this plan are simple. It involves fasting for a full 24 hours once or two days a week – yikes!

This means that if you start fasting at 7 pm on Saturday, you consume nothing except liquids until 7 pm on Sunday. You eat normally on the other days of the week.

This is an excellent natural detox therapy for the body and gives the digestive system a much-needed rest. However, it's extremely challenging for even veteran fasters, let alone beginners.

For this reason, you should not consider jumping in feet first with this plan. It's much better to build up gradually until you feel you're ready for such a challenge.

The bottom line: It's perfectly okay to try each of these methods before settling on the one that works best for you. They're all tough, and they're all challenging. However, the body does gradually adapt to going without food (or drastically limiting food intake as in the 5:2 diet).

Step 3: Prepare Yourself Mentally And Know What To Expect

If you are an average healthy person with no serious medical condition, intermittent fasting is totally risk-free. Yet, for many people, there is a mental barrier that makes the idea of going without food a little terrifying. This is especially true in the Western world where we are surrounded by almost any type of food we can imagine, and where we are used to eating whatever we want whenever we want it.

The idea of voluntary deprivation is sometimes off-putting to our Western lifestyle and mentality. This mental barrier is the real challenge you need to overcome, more than the physical discomfort of fasting itself.

Prepare yourself mentally by understanding that yes, it will be tough especially at the beginning; but going without food for 12, 16 or even 24 hours will not harm you in any way. In fact, it was the norm for our early ancestors to go without food for long periods of time. As hunters and gatherers, they were sometimes forced to fast until they found food. The human body is totally adapted to fasting.

Keep yourself motivated and mentally tough by keeping your health goals top of mind, as well as the awesome benefits you will gain from fasting. Remember, you are doing it because you care about your health. Try to see it as a new challenge and an exciting adventure you've never tried before. It can actually become a very positive and enjoyable experience!

What To Expect

Fasting does have some side effects, at least in the beginning. Being prepared for these will also help you toughen up mentally. The side effects are normal and common, so don't panic if you experience some of the following symptoms:

- Headache
- Drowsiness
- Irritability
- Mood swings
- Brain fog
- Fatigue
- A tendency to overeat and feel bloated when you break your fast, in the beginning
- Constipation
- Obsessing about food

- Hunger pangs

These side effects are perfectly normal and should subside as your body gradually adapts itself to your new eating method. However, if they don't subside in a couple of weeks, then fasting just may not be for you.

In rare cases, intermittent fasting can cause hair loss, sleep disturbances and migraines. Although there is no serious risk involved even with these symptoms, it could be that again, fasting is just not for you.

Start Simple

Another way to prepare yourself physically and mentally is to start with small steps. Rather than choosing an intermittent fasting plan and jumping into it right away, try the following for a week or two until you feel more comfortable with depriving yourself of food.

- ***Skip breakfast.*** Have some unsweetened herbal tea or coffee in the morning and don't eat anything else until

lunchtime. Do this for one week. It's a great way to ease into the real thing.

- ***Don't snack.*** Intermittent fasting can be particularly challenging if you are used to grazing or snacking throughout the day. Prepare yourself by cutting out all snacks between meals for a whole week before starting your fasting plan.
- ***Don't eat after dinner.*** Make dinner your absolute final meal of the day. Eat nothing and drink nothing except water, nothing but water until breakfast the next day.

Intermittent fasting can be a mental challenge as well as a physical one. However, it doesn't take long to overcome these hurdles once you get the hang of it. The side effects will gradually disappear, your body will adapt and you will begin to notice the amazing impact that fasting will have on your health. That will be all the motivation you need to keep going!

Step 4: Nutrition – Making Every Meal Count

Whatever your fasting plan, bear in mind that ultimately, you will be eating less. So, applying the "less is more" philosophy is

the best way to make fasting work for you. That simply means making the most of what you eat by planning nutrition-packed meals that help you stay more full, more energized and less likely to miss essential nutrients during your fasting hours.

What To Eat

- Organic is the best way to go. Organic food costs more. But remember, you are eating fewer meals so what you save can be put into organically-raised food. This includes eggs, poultry, grass-fed beef and lamb and wild fish.
- Fiber: Give your digestive system lots of tender loving care by eating foods high in fiber, namely fresh vegetables and fruits. Consuming plenty of fiber will also help regulate your bowel movements and guard against constipation.
- Healthy carbs such as whole wheat grains, whole wheat pasta wild rice, potatoes and yams will not only keep you fuller and boost your energy levels but they are also good for digestion.
- Healthy fats are found in fish, olive oil and grass-fed butter.

Although intermittent fasting does not involve any food restrictions, it can take a toll on your health if you are filling yourself with fast food and calorie-packed snacks and sweets with zero nutrition. It also defeats the whole purpose of getting fitter and healthier.

By all means, do eat your favorite foods in moderation so that you don't feel deprived. Just make sure to balance them out with a lot of green salads, fresh fruits and other healthy foods.

The great thing about fasting is that almost anything, even your least favorite foods will seem appetizing when you're hungry. This is a terrific opportunity for you to adopt healthier and lasting eating habits by focusing on nutritious options.

You can bet that a bowl of raw spinach can be the yummiest dish in the world when you are fasting! So, let your hunger help you eat healthier and introduce less-appetizing (but nutritious) foods into your meals.

Supplements

Intermittent fasting may cause our bodies to lose some essential nutrients and vitamins. This is easily avoided by taking a good quality multi-vitamin supplement.

The only warning here is that some supplements may cause discomfort or nausea when taken on an empty stomach, so make sure to read the instructions carefully and incorporate them into your fasting plan accordingly.

Step 5: Organizing High-Activity and Low-Activity Days

One of the pros of intermittent fasting is that you can easily accommodate it into your lifestyle and schedule. The key is to schedule your fasting on days when you are less active. Here are some tips on how to sail through those fasting days more smoothly.

Schedule 24-hour fasts on weekends. This long fast is not easy, even for veterans. That's why it's best to schedule your 24-hour fasts on weekends when you are able to be less active. You can spend the time in light activities like reading, gardening or even napping so that you conserve more energy.

Exercise on non-fasting days. If you are an athlete or simply work out regularly, always schedule these intensive exercise days when you are not fasting.

Plan errands for non-fasting days. Try to plan activities like shopping, outings, dentist appointments, etc. on non-fasting days to avoid fatigue.

Accommodate your work schedule to your fasting. If you're lucky enough to be able to do this, you will have a more enjoyable fasting experience. If possible, schedule important meetings and tasks that require more focus and concentration for days when you are not fasting. If you work shifts, again, it's easy to schedule your fasting around them.

If your eating window falls at a time when you are at work, do try to bring a healthy pre-prepared meal from home rather than grabbing something from a deli or ordering fast food.

In addition, most of us generally have an idea of when our more hectic workdays are (for example, Mondays) and can easily plan our fast around them.

This is not to say that you should expect to be walking around like a zombie when you are fasting. In fact, many people report that they are more productive and have more mental clarity when they fast. These are just a few recommendations to help you ease into your fasting days at least in the beginning.

Bear in mind that despite your planning, there will be those inevitable stressful, chaotic days that will come around while you are fasting. Just be mentally prepared for these unexpected emergencies. Hopefully, you will be able to get through them without too much discomfort.

Chapter 3: 10 Helpful Tips

As you are getting into your fasting routine, consider these little tips and tweaks. Most of them are just plain common sense but it's helpful to keep them in mind.

1. If you are a woman, you need to make sure you are taking a good iron supplement. Make sure to get a lot of calcium into your diet as well. Some women may also experience irregular periods due to the hormonal changes caused by intermittent fasting. This is why intermittent fasting is not recommended for women who are trying to conceive.

2. **Stay hydrated.** It's vital that you remember to drink plenty of water while you're fasting to avoid dehydration. Use your phone alert to remind you to drink a glass of water every hour or so. Water also dulls hunger so that's an added bonus. Unsweetened herbal tea, hot or cold is another great alternative. A word of warning here: caffeine does not fall into this category, so don't go overboard on coffee and tea. A cup of unsweetened coffee or tea to perk you up in the morning should really be the

limit. If you are unable to take them black, add a few drops of milk or cream.

3. **Get into the sun.** Sunlight helps regulate the body's circadian rhythm and will help your body cycle adapt to fasting much faster. Sunlight is also a powerful source of vitamin D. Try to get out into the sun as much as you can. If you are unable to do so, consider a vitamin D supplement.

4. **Don't be a hero.** Honesty is the best policy when it comes to intermittent fasting. If, after a time, you simply can't function normally and the hunger and discomfort are just too extreme, it's time to call it quits.

There's no point in continuing if it feels like torture, or if it is debilitating. It doesn't mean you're weak or that you lack willpower, it just means that like many other people, your body is just not made for fasting.

You will never be at a loss when it comes to alternatives. You could try carb cycling or any other eating plan that does not require fasting.

5. **Eat slowly when you break your fast.** The first couple of times you fast, you will tend to be so hungry that you will eat

quickly and end up feeling pretty uncomfortable. When you sit down to eat, be mindful of eating slowly and taking small mouthfuls. Don't drink water during the meal. Chew slowly and savor every mouthful so that you avoid feeling bloated and sick after eating.

6. **Don't overeat.** Remember when you break your fast, you will have an extended eating window where you can continue to eat. So, don't do it all at once! Your breakfast should be light and nutritious and you should stop eating as soon as your hunger is moderately satisfied. Never overfill your stomach because after being without food for so long, it will go into overdrive if you overeat. You will feel sluggish, bloated and very uncomfortable indeed.

7. **Experiment with different fasting times.** Assess your lifestyle, work and family commitments to find the times that are best for you. Experiment with different fasting times before settling on a fasting schedule that suits your high activity and low activity days best.

8. **Get a fasting app.** Did you know that your phone can play a proactive role in your intermittent fasting? Fasting requires willpower, commitment and sticking to your schedule. A simple fasting app can help you stay on track.

A fasting app can do everything from organizing your fasting schedule, alerting you to mealtimes, helping you plan meals and even tracking your weight. There's a great variety of fasting apps available online for free and they are super-easy to use. If you're interested, check out the best fasting apps for 2020 here:

<https://www.womenshealthmag.com/weight-loss/g29554400/intermittent-fasting-apps/>

9. **Keep track of your progress.** Tracking your progress is important to keep you motivated and excited about the changes you will experience. Nutrition experts recommend keeping a good journal. You can use it to record your feelings every few days as well as weight loss and other improvements you start to notice.

10. **Enjoy yourself!** Intermittent fasting is not a self-imposed punishment. Frankly, if this is the way you perceive it, your chances of making progress are slim. Instead, always look at intermittent fasting as your proactive choice for better health and wellbeing. Your mindset is what creates the line between success and failure.

If you have a positive and excited mindset, intermittent fasting can become an enjoyable experience.

Conclusion

Hopefully, you now have all the basics you need to start your intermittent fasting routine. It's not going to be easy at first. You will feel hungry and irritable and can expect to experience some discomfort at the beginning. But if you stick it out, the discomfort will gradually subside.

Soon, you will begin to see and feel the powerful benefits of intermittent fasting on your physical and mental wellbeing. You will lose weight, have more mental clarity, have better digestion and just feel so much healthier.

Follow the simple steps and tips provided here to help you quick-start and then ease into a successful – and hopefully, a consistent – fasting routine. Do more research if you need to, read about the experience of others and do consult your doctor if you have any further doubts.

Finally, all that remains is for you to put these steps and tips into practice and decide for yourself if intermittent fasting is all that it claims to be.

HAPPY FASTING!