First, let us define the two major types of fasting: INTERMITTENT and MEDITATIVE fasting. Then we will be able to delve into the why and how.

Meditative Fasting
In the East, the act of fasting has been performed for thousands of years as a tool to reach new states of consciousness. It helps us turn things down a notch and take a day to contemplate life and distill things back to the meaningful nuggets. It helps us keep it real and not get caught up in the noise that has distracted us away from life, nature, love, and truth.

Intermittent Fasting
Over the past few years, people in the West have started embracing intermittent fasting to take advantage of its numerous health benefits for both mind and body. It may not be for everyone, but for those whose bodies are capable, it can be a powerful tool for regular recalibration.

Intermittent fasting is not a diet, it’s a pattern of eating. Intermittent fasting is a term for an eating pattern that cycles between periods of fasting and eating. It’s a way of scheduling your meals so that you get the most out of them. It doesn’t focus about which foods you should eat, but rather when you should eat them.
Our Ancestors Didn’t Have Food Available Year-Round

They weren’t able to go buy food already made, nor were they able to store food to keep it fresh for a long period of time. As a result of not having food available 24/7, our ancestors’ bodies evolved to be able to function without food for extended periods of time. If anything, fasting from time to time is more “natural” than constantly eating 3-4 (or more) meals per day, even if we’re not starving.

Intermittent Fasting Is Much Easier Than Dieting

It was proved to be an effective strategy for weight loss in obese adults as the subjects were able to quickly adapt to an intermittent fasting routine. Intermittent fasting is easy to implement once you get over the idea that you need to eat all the time.¹

Increase In HGH Secretion

Fasting enhances human growth hormone secretion and amplifies the complex rhythms of growth hormone secretion. The levels of growth hormone increase as much as 5-fold.²

A study concluded that GH with or without sex steroids in healthy, aged women and men increased LBM and decreased fat mass.³

Insulin Levels Drop

Oxidation of fat increased with alternate day fasting. Insulin sensitivity improves and levels of insulin drop dramatically. Lower insulin levels make stored body fat more accessible.⁴

Cellular Repair Increases

When fasted, your cells initiate cellular repair processes. Short-term fasting has been shown to induce profound neuronal autophagy, where cells digest and remove old and dysfunctional proteins that build up inside cells. Since disruption of autophagy can cause neurodegeneration, upregulation of this pathway may be neuroprotective. Sporadic fasting represents a simple, safe and inexpensive means to promote this potentially therapeutic neuronal response.⁵
Changes In Gene Expression

Recent studies have demonstrated that fasting may protect normal cells and mice from metabolic conditions that are harmful as well as decrease the incidence of carcinogenesis. Fasting could also slow the tumor growth and augment the efficacy of certain systemic agents/chemotherapy drugs in various cancers. The mechanism behind this proposed idea may be due to, at least in some part, the metabolic regulation by the Sirtuin family proteins whose functions are involved in specific aspects of longevity, stress response and metabolism. Sirtuins, particularly SIRT1 and SIRT3, can be activated by fasting and further exhibit their effects in insulin response, antioxidant defense, and glycolysis. Therefore, sirtuins may have anticancer effects by shifting metabolism to a less proliferative cell phenotype as well as less prone to oxidative stress attack.¹

There is also evidence suggesting that two dietary interventions, caloric restriction and intermittent fasting, can prolong the health-span of the nervous system by impinging upon fundamental metabolic and cellular signaling pathways that regulate life-span. Calorie restriction and intermittent fasting affect energy and oxygen radical metabolism, and cellular stress response systems, in ways that protect neurons against genetic and environmental factors to which they would otherwise succumb during aging.²

Increase In Metabolic Rate

Starvation leads to considerable alterations in basal metabolism including a significant (mean 3.6%) increase in resting metabolic rate. In a study on thermogenic response to epinephrine, chronotropic, lipolytic, and thermogenic effects of infused epinephrine were enhanced by prior starvation, despite the lower plasma epinephrine levels.³
Meditative Fasting

Fasting gives us an opportunity to take a break from solid food to heal the gut, clean the blood, and think about life with more clarity. By slowing down the workload of the digestive system, we give it a chance to clean up a bit. When we fast, we divert some of the energy we spend on breaking down food into repairing the gut lining. We give our immune systems a break by cutting off the need for them to create a steady flow of digestive enzymes. To fast properly, take on teas or fluids to help nudge the bowels along so the fasting process also helps our detoxification pathways.

A key to always keep in your pocket is to make sure your adrenals are healthy enough to sustain a blood sugar dip. Young, healthy people can get away with this, but I’ve seen many a 45-year-old come in with major problems after trying things that were not suitable for them.

You must also understand that fasting without deep contemplation is a risky proposition. Trying to run your day at the same velocity while depriving your body of food is stupid. Fasting helps us turn things down a notch and take a day to contemplate life and distill things back to the meaningful nuggets. It helps us keep it real and not get caught up in the noise that has distracted us away from life, nature, love, and truth. The key is to take the day to slow down and do some personal spiritual practice. Don’t fast on a regular workday with deadlines and bullets flying at you. You’ll miss the whole point. The ancients fasted but spent their time praying and meditating. Don’t mix metaphors. If you’re going to take a day to fast and drink only water, then take the day to write, relax, and think about life. Make it a ritual and slow down. Try to concurrently take a vow of silence on days you fast. Conserve your breath and pull your energy in. Sundays are good for this.
Intermittent fasting is easy to implement once you get over the idea that you need to eat all the time. This sounds pretty hard, but once you get into the rhythm of things, you’ll know what to expect and how to navigate through it. Like most things, positive mentality prevails.

There are also a few different schedules to follow.

**Daily Intermittent Fasting**

This model of intermittent fasting utilizes a 16–hour (men) and 14-hour (women) fast followed by an 8–10 hour eating period. Depending on your diet, this method can help you keep lean muscle mass while dropping fat mass. To do this, ensure you are still maintaining the same caloric intake when eating.

What and when you eat during the feeding window also depends on when you work out. On days you exercise, carbs are more important than fat. On rest days, fat intake should be higher. Protein consumption should be fairly high every day, though it will vary based on goals, gender, age, body fat and activity levels. Regardless of your specific goals, whole, unprocessed foods should make up the majority of your calorie intake. However, when there isn’t time for a meal, a protein shake or meal replacement bar is acceptable (in moderation).
Weekly Intermittent Fasting

This model of intermittent fasting utilizes a 24–hour fast followed by an 8–10 hour eating period. Eating this way will reduce overall calorie intake without really limiting what you’re able to eat — just how often. As we’ve already covered, the occasional fast has been shown to provide many benefits. So, even if you don’t use it to cut down on calories consistently there are still many other health benefits you can take advantage of.

If improved body composition (lower fat to muscle ratio) is your goal, incorporating regular workouts, such as resistance training, will be your key to success on this plan. Keep in mind that only fasting will not take you where you want to go. It takes a proper diet of whole foods and consistent energy expenditure - or in other words, exercise. Help, don’t hurt your cause.

It is important to remember that a 24–hour fast will be tough at first. So if you find the need to gradually increase your hours of fasting to reach 24, then by all means go ahead and do so. Set yourself up for success.

This long fasting period can also make it more tempting to binge eat once your fasting period is over. This can be easily fixed... but it takes a lot of self-control, which some people lack.
Alternate Day Intermittent Fasting

This model of intermittent fasting utilizes a cycle of a 24–hour fast followed by an 8–10 hour period of eating. Eating this way will maximize your time in the fasted state, meaning that you will be maximizing the benefits of fasting listed in The Why section. If you wish to maximize fat loss while retaining muscle mass, this schedule may be the best to follow provided that you are exercising and compensating for the lack of calories with nutritious whole foods.

As mentioned previously, it is important to remember that a 24–hour fast will be tough, especially when undergoing every other day. If you find the need to gradually increase your hours of fasting to reach 24, then by all means go ahead and do so. You can start with a weekly intermittent fasting schedule, then slowly progress to adding a 24–hour fast every other day.

Again, this long fasting period can make it more tempting to binge eat once your fasting period is over. Build yourself up to control your ambitions and spread your food out throughout the remaining eating period.

An important thing to note is that everyone is different. If you find yourself tweaking any of the previous schedules with results, by all means go ahead and do so. Pay attention to your body. Listen and learn.
In General


When eating, eat mostly whole, minimally processed foods, instead of processed foods or supplements. Your body will thank you. It will show you the results you want to see and more importantly, feel.

Exercise with high intensity, a few times per week. If you’re undertaking a meditative fast, do not exercise. If you’re undertaking an intermittent fasting schedule, throw in a few exercise sessions towards the end of your fast. This will push your body to places it probably has never been before. With that said, if you know your body cannot handle the extra stress, workout once your fasting period has ended. Lastly, putting effort in the places that matter most will yield results that you probably weren’t aware of in body, mind, and soul.

During The Fast


If you’re having issues keeping your blood sugar levels stable, try these options below:

- Add some raw honey to your tea.
- Drink a mix of fresh-pressed vegetable and fruit juice. Ensure you are drinking equal parts water. You will find a few of our favorite recipes below. If you absolutely need to sweeten any of the recipes below, add in the optional Flavor+ ingredients. If you choose to use your own recipe, or are buying fresh-pressed juice from the store, confirm that the ingredients being used are low on the glycemic index.

Morning Green Juice - makes 2-3 servings

- 4 leaves organic lacinato kale
- 1 organic cucumber
- 3 cups organic spinach
- 5 stalks organic celery
- 1/2 bunch organic parsley
- Flavor+: 1/2 organic apple + 1/4-inch knob of organic ginger

Carrot Beet Juice - makes 1-2 servings

- 1 organic beet
- 1 an organic carrot
- 1/2-inch knob of organic ginger
- 1 organic lemon (peel removed)
- 4 cups organic spinach (packed)
- 2 stalks of organic celery
“Every fool can fast, but only the wise man knows how to break a fast.” - George Bernard Shaw

The first foods that you consume upon breaking a fast are critical to nourishing the body, yet when being digested and assimilated should not cause your body to expend much energy. There are several things you can eat upon ending your fast to smooth the transition.

If you’re going to fast on water for a day or more, you need to ease back slowly into eating food. Start with a broth, then a blended soup, then steamed vegetables, and then eventually solids the next day. The key practice is to ease back into foods and, on a spiritual level, really connect with the food that you’re breaking your fast with on a profound level. Giving thanks for the life energy you’re letting back in to the Source from which it came is a powerful way to reconnect with nature and meaning.

If you’re on an intermittent fasting schedule, start with the aforementioned until your body gets used to your new eating schedule. Then modify based on your goals. You may also want to start by fasting one day of the week, strategically adding more as your body adapts. Regardless of your fast, avoid citrus fruits during this initial exit-phase since they may be too acidic for your empty stomach.

**Raw vegetables:** a source of vitamins, minerals, phytonutrients and antioxidants. Remember to choose organic vegetables and juices after a fast. Organically grown produce naturally has higher levels of antioxidants and is free of harmful chemicals (pesticides and herbicides), which will equate to a lower number of speedbumps that your body needs to overcome. If you absolutely cannot tolerate the taste, balance out your veggie heavy juice with some fruit. Though, when you’re starving taste and flavor seem to come second to the feeling of food and nutrients in your stomach.

**MEALS:** When you fast, you typically are in a caloric deficit. You’re going to be hungry. For example with a daily intermittent fast, if your lunch is always constant with the same macronutrient breakdown, the only varied meal will be dinner. It can be smaller if cutting, mid-sized if...
maintaining, or a feast if bulking. On your exercise days, eat 2-3 big meals of protein, veggies, and carbs. Your post-workout meals need to be your largest meals of the week, no exceptions. If any of your meals are too large for your stomach, eat them in shifts. On non-exercise days, lower your protein intake to a normal level.

The average person needs about 40% of their protein intake to be comprised of branched chain amino acids (BCAAs): leucine, isoleucine and valine. If you’re actively working out, whether that be to maintain or build muscle, you will probably need to up your BCAA intake per meal. Like all foods, it is best to ingest these proteins via whole foods, rather than with a supplement. Here are examples of whole foods that are good sources of BCAAs:

**Some Sources of Leucine Include:**
- Soy protein concentrate
- Peanuts
- Almonds
- Wheat germ
- Oats
- Pinto beans
- Chick peas
- Lentils
- Brown rice
- Corn
- Beef
- Salmon
- Chicken
- Eggs
- Milk
- Hummus

**Some Good Sources of Valine Include:**
- Soy
- Lentils
- Peanuts
- Sesame seeds
- Fish
- Chicken
- Turkey
- Beef
- Mushrooms
- Cottage cheese
- Carrots
- Celery
- Turnips

**Some Good Sources of Isoleucine Include:**
- Eggs
- Soy protein
- Chicken
- Turkey
- Lamb
- Fish
- Beef
- Peanuts
- Cashews
- Lentils
- Cheese
- Seaweed


THE URBAN MONK .COM

VISIT US