

READER

A Newsletter for Members of
Healthy America Association • 2019

To Fast or Not to Fast Does When You Eat Matter?

What you eat matters. Many studies have shown that the types of food you eat affect your health. But what about the timing? Scientists are just beginning to understand that when you eat may also make a difference.

Throughout history, people have experienced periods when food was either scarce or completely lacking, says Dr. Valter Longo, an NIH-funded longevity researcher at the University of Southern California. “So, they were forced to fast,” he says.

But current technology—like refrigeration, transportation, and electric lighting—have made food more readily available.

“This has shifted our eating patterns,” explains Dr. Vicki Catenacci, a nutrition researcher at the University of Colorado. “People now eat, on average, throughout a 14-hour period each day.”

Studies suggest that this constant food intake may lead to health problems. Researchers have started looking at whether fasting can have potential benefits for some people.

Going Without Food

Fasting diets mainly focus on the timing of when you can eat. There are many different fasting diets, sometimes called “intermittent fasting.”

In time-restricted feeding, you eat every day but only during a limited number of hours. So, you may only eat between a six- to eight-hour window each day. For example, you might eat breakfast and lunch, but skip dinner. In alternate-day fasting, you eat every other day and no or few calories on the days in between. Another type restricts calories during the week but not on weekends.

But scientists don’t know much about what happens to your body when you fast. Most research has been done in cells and animals in the lab. That work has provided early clues as to how periods without food might affect the body.

In some animals, certain fasting diets seem to protect against diabetes, heart disease, and cognitive decline. Fasting has even slowed the aging process and protected against cancer in some experiments.



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To Fast or Not to Fast *(continued from page 1)*

"In mice, we've seen that one of the effects of fasting is to kill damaged cells, and then turn on stem cells," explains Longo. Damaged cells can speed up aging and lead to cancer if they're not destroyed. When stem cells are turned on, new healthy cells can replace the damaged cells.

Now, studies are starting to look at what happens in people, too. Early results have found that some types of fasting may have positive effects on aspects of health like blood sugar control, blood pressure, and inflammation. But fasting can also cause weight loss. So researchers are studying whether the beneficial changes seen in the body are side effects of the weight loss or the fasting process itself.

Body Changes

For many people, the main reason to try fasting is to lose weight. Currently, most people try to lose weight by restricting how many calories they eat each day.

"That doesn't work for everyone," Catenacci explains. "It takes a lot of focus. It takes a lot of math, and a lot of willpower."

One of Catenacci's studies showed that, over a two-month period, adults who were overweight or obese were equally likely to lose about 15 pounds when they either completely fasted every other day or restricted their calories every day.

"For some people, restricting calories every day may be the best approach. For others, it might be easier to not have to count calories every day and use an intermittent fasting strategy for weight loss," says Catenacci. "The best diet for any given person is the one that they can adhere to. I don't think weight loss is a one size fits all approach."

Now her research team is running a similar study to compare how much weight participants lose with fasting versus calorie restriction, but over a one-year period. They're also testing whether adding a small meal on fasting days will make it easier to stick to as a longer-term weight loss strategy.

But are the benefits from fasting all due to weight loss or is there something more to it? "There's a lot of debate about whether the benefits of intermittent fasting are due to the extended fasting period itself," says Dr. Courtney Peterson, an NIH-funded nutrition researcher at the University of Alabama.

To understand this better, Peterson did a study in pre-diabetic men. It was designed so the volunteers would not lose weight. The men ate an early time-restricted feeding diet for five weeks. They could eat only between 8 am to 2 pm. They then fasted for the next 18 hours. Next, they ate

the same amount of food but only during a 12-hour period per day for five weeks. None of the men lost weight.

The longer fasting period alone made a difference. "The early time-restricted diet improved their blood sugar control," Peterson says. "And we found a blood pressure lowering effect equivalent to what you see with a blood pressure medication."

These findings suggest that an extended fast or the timing of when you eat—even when it doesn't affect your weight—can bring health benefits for some people.

Should You Fast?

Fasting may bring health benefits, but Longo cautions that there's still a lot we don't know. For some, fasting may cause problems. For example, studies have found that people who regularly fast more than 16 or 18 hours a day have a higher risk of gallstones. They're also more likely to need surgery to remove the gallbladder.

Eating for 12 hours and then fasting for 12 hours is likely safe for most people, Longo explains. "That pattern of eating is very common among people who have record lifespans," he says. "It seems to match both science and tradition."

Longo and his team are also looking at fasting-mimicking diets, which they hope will be safer and easier to follow than completely fasting. They designed a five-day, monthly fasting-mimicking diet that allows some food, but is low in calories. They tested the diet for three months in a recent study. Those who stayed on the diet lost weight and showed decreases in age-related disease risk factors.

But he and other experts caution against people trying fasting diets that are not based on research. If you're considering fasting, talk with your health care provider first. People with certain health conditions or who are taking certain medications should not try fasting at all.

Even if you fast sometimes, you still need to make healthy food choices overall, Peterson explains. "It looks like when you eat matters a lot, but what you eat probably matters more."

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NOTICE of ANNUAL MEETING of MEMBERS

The Annual Meeting of the Members of Healthy America Association will be held at 16476 Wild Horse Creek Road, Chesterfield, Missouri, on Friday, December 13, 2019 at 11:00 a.m. (CST) for election of Directors and for the transaction of such other business as may properly come before the meeting of any adjournment thereof.

The above notice is given pursuant to the By-Laws of the Association.

PROXY

Healthy America Association December 13, 2019 Annual Meeting of Members THIS PROXY IS SOLICITED ON BEHALF OF HEALTHY AMERICA ASSOCIATION

The undersigned member of Healthy America Association does hereby constitute and appoint the President of Healthy America Association, the true and lawful attorney(s) of the undersigned with full power of substitution, to appear and act as the proxy or proxies of the undersigned at the Annual Meeting of the Members of Healthy America Association and at any and all adjournments thereof, and to vote for and in the name, place and stead of the undersigned, as fully as the undersigned might or could do if personally present, as set forth below:

- (1) FOR (), or to () WITHHOLD AUTHORITY to vote for, the following nominees for Board of Directors: Jim Zimmermann, Nolan Broughton and Steve Bunce
- (2) In their discretion, the proxies are authorized to vote upon such other business as may properly come before the Meeting.

This proxy when properly executed will be voted in the manner directed by the undersigned member. If no direction is made, this proxy will be voted for the election of directors and officers.

DATED: _____, 2019.

Signature _____

Name (please print) _____

Please date and sign and return promptly to 16476 Wild Horse Creek Road, Chesterfield, Missouri 63017 whether or not you expect to attend this meeting. The Proxy is revocable and will not affect your right to vote in person in the event that you attend the meeting.

Chesterfield, Missouri

November 14, 2019

Date

Staying in the Hospital?

Safety Tips for Your Visit

Having a health problem can be scary. Add in a visit to the hospital, and it can become overwhelming. But there are things you can do to make your stay safer and more comfortable.

Hospitals are busy places. Different people may come in and out of your room. You might have many tests. And while you wait for answers, there can be harmful germs lurking around. These things can raise the chance for medical errors and infections.

Being engaged and asking the right questions can help lower the risks that come with a hospital stay, says Laura Lee, who oversees patient safety at the NIH Clinical Center, the nation's largest research hospital.

Lee suggests you bring along someone you trust. Having someone with you can be a big help in making decisions and navigating your stay. It can be a friend or family member.

If you don't have someone with you, a trusted member of your care team can be your advocate too. They can help explain things if you need more information. Some hospitals may have special patient advocates you can ask for as well.

Next, figure out who's in charge of your care. Ask your care team: "Who is the captain of my ship?" Lee says. You'll want to find out who is responsible for leading the team and resolving issues if something goes wrong. This person can help ensure that your needs are met.

Infections are a major concern during a hospital stay. The good news is that hand washing is a simple way to prevent the spread of germs.

It's important that everyone coming into your room practice good hand hygiene. This includes you, your visitors, and the hospital staff caring for you. Don't be afraid to ask: "Did you wash your hands?" if you didn't see them do it.

It's also important to talk honestly with your medical team. "Be an open communicator and partner with your health care team," says Capt. Antoinette Jones, the NIH Clinical Center patient representative. "You have to be willing to speak up for yourself."

Don't be shy about asking the same question two or three times. Answers to medical questions can be complicated. You may get different answers from different people caring for you. Keep asking until you feel like you understand completely.

Don't feel like you're wasting your doctor's time by asking questions. "That white coat is not armor that keeps you from asking questions or asking them to explain. It's just a piece of fabric," Lee says. Speak up if you have concerns. They're there to help you.

Finally, keep a written record of your stay. At the NIH Clinical Center, patients can access many of their medical notes and test results electronically in real time. If your hospital doesn't offer this option, you or your advocate can take careful notes instead. Record information about tests, medications, and the providers that come to visit.

Having this record can help prevent mistakes by allowing you to double-check information. And you can always request to have a complete copy of your electronic health record at any time.



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**Healthy America Association
Membership Services Office
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Chesterfield, MO 63017**

Stay Safe in the Hospital

- Bring a friend or family member with you to serve as an advocate.
- Know the members of your care team. Learn who's overseeing your care.
- Make sure your care providers and visitors wash their hands or use hand sanitizer.
- Know the signs and symptoms of infection.
- Ask your health care team questions and voice any concerns.
- Protect yourself by getting vaccinated against flu.
- Keep a written record about tests, medications, and the providers who visit you to help prevent mistakes.

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For information regarding your membership and association discounts, call or write:

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