

## Intermittent Fasting



Intermittent fasting is an alternative to consider if you are struggling with the low carbohydrate lifestyle. Intermittent fasting is when you go without eating for extended periods of time, followed by a period of normal eating. This is likened to the way our ancestors used to eat and is thought to have health benefits such as weight loss, improving blood sugar control, improving gut health, improved sleep, reducing inflammatory markers in chronic diseases and improving cardiovascular health. We have short term data showing positive impact of intermittent fasting but we do not yet have long term data.

### How does Intermittent Fasting work?

Intermittent fasting gives our body a break from digesting food. This promotes a process called autophagy where damaged and unnecessary parts of a cell are removed. There is also a reduction of our total calorie intake by restricting food intake during the fasting hours so our bodies will use our fat stores of energy more efficiently which promotes weight loss. Our bodies normally use glucose from carbohydrates as our fuel source but when glucose is not available we use our fat stores for energy. This is the ketosis theory.

### Types of Intermittent Fasting

There are different types of intermittent fasting which vary in their level of difficulty.

**14:10:** This is a simpler form of intermittent fasting where you would eat during a 10 hour window and then fast for 14 hours. Examples include eating between 8am and 6pm and then fasting between 6pm and 8am. This is a good starting point.

**16:8:** This is where you eat during an 8 hour window and then fast for 16 hours. Examples include eating between 10am and 6pm and then fasting for the rest of the time. During the fasting period you can only consume drinks that are calorie free such as water, black tea or coffee. 16:8 is a popular fasting method.

**24 hour fast:** Some people may fast for an entire 24 hour period either weekly or monthly where they will not eat anything between breakfast one day to breakfast the next day or lunch/dinner one day to lunch/dinner the next day.

**5:2:** In this plan for two days each week you reduce your calorie intake to 500 calories for women and 600 calories for men and then eat normally for the rest of the week. Examples would be fasting on Mondays and Thursdays. There are also variations to this including alternate day fasting.

## Side effects and Cautions

Intermittent fasting may cause fatigue, headaches, hunger and cravings in its initial stages but these symptoms should pass as your body adapts to your new way of eating. People with medical conditions should discuss this diet with their doctor before fasting. Certain conditions would not be safe to consider intermittent fasting. These include:

- Eating disorders
- Type 1 diabetes (Type 2 diabetics on insulin or gliclazide should seek appropriate advice from their doctor before fasting for prolonged periods to reduce their risk of hypoglycaemia)
- Pregnancy

People may also overeat on their non fasting days/hours which needs to be avoided. It is important to keep well hydrated and eat a healthy, balanced diet so eating a wide range of vegetables, fruits with low sugar content, lean proteins, healthy fats and wholegrains.

If you would like to find out more about intermittent fasting, please see links below;

<https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/intermittent-fasting-guide#>

<https://patient.info/news-and-features/is-intermittent-fasting-a-healthy-way-to-lose-weight#:~:text=Intermittent%20fasting%20is%20a%20popular,such%20as%20type%20%20diabetes.>