

What happens if I skip breakfast?

By Dr David A. Pierotti

The wisdom of ancient cultures often turns out to be quite truthful. Now, Intermittent Fasting is starting to show it's validity in the scientific literature. Questions arise about the type, timing and reasons for fasting and whether they can be healthy for you. Let's explore.



There are several forms of intermittent fasting or scheduled eating you might like to try which suggest refraining from eating for between 14-18 hours, with the longest period being up to 32-36 hours.

Research has shown that there may be a number of benefits such as normalizing your insulin sensitivity (helping to curb the precursor to diabetes), boosting human growth hormone, lowering triglyceride levels, extending life, and lessening free radical activity.

Intermittent fasting (IF) is a technique you'd most likely employ if you felt as though you'd hit a plateau in exercising or weight loss. There are lots of ways to do it poorly and also many ways to do it well. The first thing to consider is whether you are generally healthy to start with. Fasting is never recommended for people susceptible to hypoglycemia, have diabetes, or are pregnant or breast-feeding.

You may already be familiar with the idea of skipping breakfast and exercising on an empty stomach to burn excess fat stores while still preserving muscular bulk and tone. This is an effective strategy and may be a good place to begin experimenting for yourself.

As always, I strongly recommend that you use your body as the guide and exercise extreme caution and awareness if you choose to experiment with this. You

must be alert to your energy levels and how it makes you feel in general.

On overall guideline here is that if you are feeling hungry - eat! Likewise if in the morning you do not feel like any food for several hours, then this is a good time to try waiting for the hunger signal to come.

Furthermore, IF is not something to experiment with if you haven't mastered the art of eating the right foods to begin with. Refraining from eating for 14 hours may be useful if you break the fast with a balanced meal including vegetables, protein, good fat and fibre. But if you choose junk or packaged food you'll most likely negate any of the positive effects of the fast. I'll share my favourite break-fast recipe at the end of the article.

A note for athletes

One way to approach this idea if you're exercising or training regularly and then competing is to experiment with fasting during training and then eating on game/competition days. A big caution against excessive fasting for athletes is the very real risk of overtraining if undernourished during this period. Tread lightly.

This topic is certainly not black and white (few things in health are) and therefore it may get confusing at times. There are only a few rules which apply such as reducing and limiting sugar (especially fructose), eating high quality fat and avoiding processed and packaged foods - the rest comes down to listening to your body and

finding out your ideal nutrition plan regarding what you eat and when.

Therefore, it requires some trial and error.

For breakfast, there is already good evidence suggesting a high-protein meal works well for many people wanting to lose weight. Also, there's plenty of evidence supporting exercise before the first meal to break the fast. I have personally experimented with this and it seems to work well. I'll simply delay my first meal until I'm hungry. Some days that will be at 8 am and others at midday. But, ultimately my hunger signals are the boss.

Some more examples of fasting styles

1. **LeanGains.** Daily 14-16 hour fast (sleeping included), during which time you consume nothing except non-caloric fluids. It's designed with regular exercise in mind, with specific nutrient ratios for workout days and rest days, and is geared for those who want to shed excess fat and gain muscle mass.
2. **Eat Stop Eat.** Fast for a full 24 hours once or twice a week. Your fast should be broken with a regular-sized meal, maintaining a regular exercise program without any special diet recommendations for workout days. Fasting for 24 hours can certainly be a challenge. A diet consisting of high-fat, low-carb foods can make 24-hour fasting easier, as a higher fat diet will tend to normalize your hunger hormones and provide improved satiety for longer periods of time.
3. **The Warrior Diet** Created by Ori Hofmekler - this plan calls for 20 hours of fasting, and four hours of "feasting." You exercise during the day in a fasted state. Raw vegetables are allowed during your fast, but no protein, which is reserved for "feasting" or post-exercise recovery meals.
4. **Alternate Day Fasting.** Exactly as it sounds: one day off, one day on. When you include sleeping time, the fast can end up being as long as 32-36 hours. This may be the most difficult of all types of fasting, as it will require you to go to bed with an empty stomach a few times a week. It's definitely not for everyone.

My favourite break-fast recipe



This is a delicious, nutrient-dense shake that I developed recently that works wonders for me. Try it for yourself and see how your body responds.

- 2 free range organic locally laid eggs
- 10 grams organic grass-fed whey protein concentrate
- 1 tsp organic coconut oil
- dash of cinnamon
- splash of water to adjust viscosity of shake
- 1 very ripe banana (tastes best when it's mostly blackened)

Also, remember that fasting is a form of stress. The right amount of stress on the body will cause a change and compensation towards improvement. However when the stressor is too large, more damage than benefit will be the result (i.e when we're too stressed we get sick). So never just brazenly go without eating for the sake of it. The huge amounts of extra cortisol released will outweigh any benefits of the fast. Implement any changes slowly, and as always, experiment by listening to your body.

In conclusion, consider an IF protocol if life is good but you have hit a plateau with exercise or weight loss. Experiment initially with delaying breakfast until you're hungry and exercising during this time. At the very least, use your hunger as the master controller and only eat when you're hungry (caution: if you're prone to cravings, this won't be applicable!)

Extra Resources

To learn more, visit Mark Sisson's comprehensive blog page on the topic or go to mercola.com and search intermittent fasting.

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