

# Unleashing the Potential of Intermittent Fasting: Effectiveness and Health Considerations!



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In a world where diet trends come and go like fashion fads, intermittent fasting has emerged as more than just a passing wave, it's becoming a lifestyle with rewarding health benefits.

Scientists believe by its ability to promote weight loss, enhance metabolic complications, and even boost longevity. However, like any other restrictive diet, intermittent fasting comes with its own set of limitations and potential health concerns. Exploring the details of intermittent fasting can help understand when and where to use it and sheds light on the necessary precautions to be taken.

## 1. Understanding Intermittent Fasting:

Intermittent fasting is a dietary regimen that focuses on cycling between periods of fasting and eating unlike typical diets that divides food intake all over the day. Instead of focusing on what to eat, the new concept on intermittent fasting attracted many as it only focuses on when to eat. There are several different ways to do intermittent fasting, you might try eating only during an eight-hour period each day and fast for the 16 remaining hours. Or you might choose eating normally for five days and restricting calories for two non-consecutive days.

After hours without food, the body exhausts its sugar stores and steps into the energy reserves primarily fat to fuel itself. This metabolic switch is behind the health

benefits attributed to this dietary pattern and its ability to prevent certain chronic diseases.

## 2. Intermittent Fasting benefits:

Good scientific evidence suggests that circadian rhythm fasting, when combined with a healthy diet and lifestyle, can be particularly an effective approach to:

**a. Weight Loss and Metabolic Health:** By restricting the time window for eating, intermittent fasting naturally reduces calorie intake and burns fat, leading to rapid weight loss. Additionally, it can improve metabolic health by lowering: insulin levels, fasting blood glucose, leptin hormone and by increasing insulin sensitivity, and adiponectin which will therefore reduce the risk of type 2 diabetes.

**b. Cellular Repair and Longevity:** During fasting, the body undergoes cellular restoration where old dysfunctional cells are degraded and changed with new ones. This may contribute to longevity and a reduced risk of chronic diseases such as: cancers and age-related neurodegenerative disorders.

**c. Brain Health and Cognitive Function:** Intermittent fasting may enhance brain health and improve cognitive function by promoting the production of brain-derived neurotrophic factor (BDNF), a protein that supports brain health and function.

**d. Heart Health:** Intermittent fasting has shown to reduce risk factors for heart disease, by lowering blood pressure, cholesterol levels, and inflammatory markers.

However, people with advanced diabetes, on medications, with a history of eating disorders (anorexia nervosa and bulimia), children under 18 years and pregnant or breastfeeding women should not attempt intermittent fasting unless under close supervision of a physician.



## Health Concerns and Considerations:

**a. Hypoglycemia:** Intermittent fasting may result in unsafe levels of blood sugar during the fasting period which threatens people with type 1 diabetes as they take insulin shots which aggravates hypoglycemia.

**b. Nutritional deficiencies:** With a reduced eating window, individuals may struggle to consume the adequate amount of essential vitamins, minerals, and other nutrients.

**c. Disordered Eating Patterns:** While intermittent fasting can be a structured approach, it may also trigger or aggravate disordered eating behaviors in susceptible individuals. Strict fasting protocols could lead to deprivation feeling, binge eating episodes during feeding windows, or unhealthy obsession in food and body image. This can oppose the attained benefits in weight management and maintenance.

**d. Keto Flu:** symptoms when first entering ketosis, can include headaches, fatigue, dizziness, irritability, nausea, difficulty sleeping, and muscle cramps. Ketosis can lead to increased excretion of electrolytes (sodium, potassium, and magnesium) through urine causing electrolyte imbalances and dehydration.

**e. Negative Effects on Hormones:** Intermittent fasting can affect hormone levels, potentially disrupting the endocrine system. Prolonged fasting triggers excessive release of cortisol stress hormone, which alters mood, energy levels, and metabolic function.

**f. Adverse Effects on Exercise Performance:** For athletes and fitness enthusiasts, intermittent fasting may pose challenges to performance and recovery. Training in a fasted state could impair strength, endurance, and muscle gain, limiting athletic potential and delaying progress toward fitness goals.

In conclusion, intermittent fasting offers a promising approach to rapid weight loss, metabolic health, and enhanced brain function. However, it's essential to recognize the potential health concerns associated with this dietary strategy, including nutritional deficiencies, disordered eating patterns, and hormonal imbalances. Consulting with a healthcare professional or registered dietitian can help determine whether intermittent fasting is appropriate and safe for you, considering your unique health status, nutritional needs, lifestyle factors and the ability to sustain healthy eating patterns.