

A Beginners Guide to Fasting: Everything You Need to Know About Fasting

Fasting refers to the deliberate abstention from food and/or fluids for a period of time, for therapeutic purposes. Many people don't know that fasting has been used for thousands of years in various religious and spiritual practices throughout human history, and in a sense, fasting is part of everyday life. The term 'breakfast' is the meal that breaks the fast, which is done daily.

The recent increase in scientific research around fasting has allowed us to understand just how fasting positively affects our physiology, cells, aging, disease and overall health. What has been incredible for me to watch in my own practice and coaching is how many people, regardless of symptoms or condition, have benefited from this completely free and simple biohack!

In 2016 [Dr. Ohsumi](#) changed the fasting landscape dramatically when he won a Nobel prize for his work on autophagy. *Autophagy* means "self-eating" and is the body's way of cleaning out damaged cells in order to regenerate newer, healthier cells. Autophagy is like the fast track to healing and slowing the aging process. What does autophagy have to do with fasting? Well, fasting triggers this magical autophagy process. Essentially, fasting helps accelerate healing and gets your body to naturally repair itself!

What happens to your body when you fast?

When you don't consume food or calories, the body looks for other ways to generate energy, such as drawing on glucose, ie. sugar stores. Once the glucose is significantly used up, the body's metabolism changes and the body begins to burn fatty acids from stored [fat](#) for energy. When this transition to burning fat for energy is made, the body begins producing ketones and is said to be in a state of "ketosis". You can measure your level of ketones using a [Keto Mojo](#) (more about this later).

Once you reach a state of ketosis, many of the benefits of fasting start to kick in. Now, the specific benefits can vary depending on how many hours you have been fasting. For example, growth hormones kick in at 13 hours, whereas autophagy is thought to kick in at 16-18 hours. MIT [research](#) shows that at 24 hours intestinal stem cells will begin repair and 24 hours is also when you start to see weight loss.

What are the benefits of fasting?

Fasting can provide significant health benefits for a variety of health issues, symptoms and conditions. Because fasting works to repair and heal on a cellular level, research suggests that it can help conditions like obesity, diabetes, sleep apnea, some types of cancer, Alzheimer's disease, arthritis, asthma, multiple sclerosis, IBS and chronic or autoimmune conditions.

Fasting can help with the following:

- Stimulating growth hormones (a fat-burning hormone) secretion by 1300%

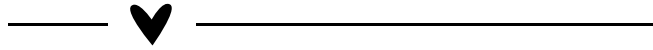
- Triggering autophagy, i.e. cleaning up of damaged cells
- Stem cells generation
- Stabilizes blood sugar
- Immune system
- Depression and anxiety
- Detoxification
- Weight loss and improved metabolic function
- Slowing the aging process and longevity
- Helping autoimmune conditions
- Normalizing your insulin and leptin sensitivity
- Lowering blood pressure
- Thyroid conditions
- Chronic pain
- Candida and gut issues
- Gallbladder issues
- Improving biomarkers of disease
- Supporting hormones and fertility
- Menopause and perimenopause
- Normalizing ghrelin levels, aka “the hunger hormone”
- Reducing inflammation and lessen free radical damage
- Lowering triglyceride levels
- Memory function and mood
- Boosting brain power by stimulating BDNF (a brain-boosting hormone) by 400%
- Supporting the treatment and prevention of cancer

The 6 Different Types of Fasting

There are 6 different types of fasts that I work on with my clients and teach in my metabolic health coaching. Each of the 6 different types of fasts have slightly different benefits and parameters on how they work. So if you're wondering how long you should fast, the answer is it will depend on what benefit you are trying to achieve and which fast you pick.

1. **Intermittent Fasting.** Intermittent fasting (IF) is the deliberate cycling between periods of fasting and eating. Most people already fast an average of 8-10 hours a day, that's from dinner to breakfast the next morning (ie. mostly while you're sleeping). With IF, what you will want to do is extend your breakfast slightly, starting one hour at a time, till you are fasting about 13-15 hours. The easiest way to do this is pushing breakfast back a couple of hours or skipping breakfast entirely and breaking your fast with lunch. There are so many benefits to IF and it's something that I recommend clients do every day (yes, every day). The [New England Journal of Medicine \(NEJM\)](#) published a great review article discussing the benefits of intermittent fasting and how time-restricted eating contributes to healthy living.
2. **Autophagy Fasting.** When our cells register dipping blood sugar while in a fasted state of 17 hours, an incredible repair process called Autophagy kicks in. Without the influx of glucose coming in, our cells respond by making themselves stronger. Autophagy improves cellular resilience in three ways: detox, repair, and removal of diseased cells altogether through apoptosis. This was discovered in 2016 when [Yoshinori Ohsumi](#) won the nobel prize for his discovery.
3. **24 hour Gut Reset.** Once you're comfortable with intermittent fasting, dinner-to-dinner is a great type of fast to try 1-2 days a week. This means fasting from after dinner until the next day's dinner. Drinking water and maybe coffee during this fast is okay. At 24 hours our microbiomes get a burst of stem cells released into the gut to repair its inner mucosal lining, which may have been damaged from years of chronic inflammation. Since 90% of a person's microbes live in their gut, extending to 24 hours invigorates the microbes that are critical to the immune system and will help make neurotransmitters that keep your brain happy, calm, and focused.
4. **36 hour Fat Burner.** The purpose of a 36 hour water fast is really to keep insulin down and go after stored sugar. This is one of the key strategies for releasing long-standing stubborn weight. If you are extremely weight loss resistant then you are going to want to implement the 36 hour fast on a weekly basis.
5. **48 hour Dopamine-Reset.** This length of fast is considered a mental health boost. Fasting can repair dopamine receptor sites, create new dopamine receptors, and improve your dopamine pathways. There is also scientific evidence that fasting longer than 24 hours makes dopamine receptors more sensitive. The interesting part of this length of fast is that the fast itself doesn't bring mental clarity immediately; rather it's in the weeks that follow when your whole dopamine system is regenerated that you will feel the benefits.
6. **72+ hour Immune-Reset.** This fast is often referred to as the 3-5 day water fast. The reason many go up to five days is because at 72 hours in a fasted state, your body regenerates stem cells. Revitalized stem cells are able to find injured body parts and make them anew. After three days of fasting, new and improved stem cells can have a dramatic healing effect on aging cells. And the body will keep making those stem cells until the person eats again. I have worked with people who have a chronic condition or going through chemotherapy who like to keep

going with their fast, extending it to five-plus days to maximize stem cell production.



How long should you fast?

One of the questions I get asked most frequently is, “how long should I fast?” Well, that depends on what health benefits you are hoping to achieve. The longer you fast, the more the benefits add up.

However, that doesn’t necessarily mean longer is better for everyone. For example, if you’re hoping to increase ketones, a 17 hour fast may be what you need, however if you’re trying to heal a musculoskeletal injury, you’ll want to work your way up to a 72 hour fast.

Here are the benefits of fasting broken down by hours fasted:

- **13-15 Hour fast:** A 13-15 hour fast is considered intermittent and if you are new to fasting, this is where you’ll want to start. At 13 hours of fasting, your body will secrete growth hormone. The growth hormone assists in burning fat and slowing down the aging process. If you are looking for an anti-aging solution I recommend this level of fasting.
- **15 hours** is when most people begin to create ketones. Ketones are a sign that your liver has moved burning sugar to burn fat for energy. Furthermore, ketones are neuroprotective and will go up to the brain, giving you energy and better mental clarity.
- **17-24 hour fasting** offers the following benefits: cellular repair, detox, cancer prevention, gut repair, aids with anxiety and depression, and brain and memory loss.
- **17 hour fast:** When you reach 17 hours without eating you will start to stimulate autophagy. What this means is the intelligence of your cells has been turned on

and they are able to repair themselves. This is best for people with autoimmune conditions.

- **24 hour fast:** At 24 hours, your intestinal cells reboot and GABA production occurs. GABA is the neurotransmitter known to relax our brain and help with anxiety. Our gut health is incredibly important in preventing autoimmune disorders and aiding in weight loss..
- **36 hour fast:** The more you fast, the more it forces your body to burn glucose, insulin, and toxins that are stored in fat. I always say that it is better to have fat around your muscles than around your organs and this length of fast will force your body to burn stored glucose and insulin. 36-48 hour fasts is where to start to see fat loss, anti-aging, and an increase in dopamine.
- **48 hour fast:** At 48 hours you begin to reset dopamine receptor sites. If you are feeling like your happiness level is not where it needs to be this is where you need to be. This fast also helps get rid of cravings as your dopamine receptors renew.
- **72 hour fast:** This is a 3 day fast when you feel like you just do not know what to do anymore. I have seen these fasts used for people with severe injuries and diagnoses that want to reboot their whole immune system where healing starts. At 72 hours your stem cells for the immune system are regenerating as well as stem cell production for musculoskeletal injuries.

How to Start Fasting: 3 Steps for First Time Fasters

So you're ready to start, the question now becomes, how do you begin fasting?

STEP 1: CREATE A FASTING WINDOW

I recommend beginner fasters start with intermittent fasting. Remember, ideally this means 13-15 hours of no food. Take a look at how long you are fasting currently, and try

extending your fasting window by two hours by pushing your breakfast time back an hour and moving your dinner time up an hour earlier.

- Get a blood reader like the [Keto Mojo](#) for this step, and [learn how to measure your blood sugar and ketones](#). You'll take a reading right after you wake up and a second reading right before you eat your first meal. What you want to see is that blood sugar is decreasing and ketones are increasing. If this isn't happening, you'll want to try increasing your fasting window and also taking a closer look at your macros. Drinking water and maybe clean black coffee during this fast is okay.
- Start counting your macro. I recommend using an app called the [Carb Manager](#) to
- do this. In this beginning phase as you're getting used to fasting, start by decreasing carbs, like bread, pasta, fruit, cookies, etc, and stay under 50 net carbs. At the same time, work on increasing your intake of healthy fats.

STEP 2: INCREASE YOUR FASTING WINDOW TO 13-15 HOURS

Once you're comfortably fasting 13-15 hours, you'll want to streamline your macros a bit more. You'll continue staying under 50 net carbs, but also under 50 net grams of protein, with 60% of your food coming from healthy fats. Drinking water and maybe clean black coffee during this fast is okay.

Now, how do you know if you're in nutritional ketosis and your body is beginning to secrete ketones? Your ketones should be reading at 0.5 or above. If you're not seeing this, **time and repetition is important** here. Sometimes the body simply needs more time to acclimate in this step and make that conversion from sugar burning to fat burning mode. If you still find you're having trouble getting into ketosis, you might have a congested liver.

STEP 3: INCREASE YOUR FASTING WINDOW TO over 17+ HOURS

You've made it to autophagy fasting! You'll continue staying under 50 net carbs, however you will want to further reduce your net grams of protein to under 20 grams, with 60% of your food still coming from healthy fats. Drinking water and maybe coffee during this fast is okay.

After mastering autophagy fasting, you may want to move into the more advanced fasts like dinner-to-dinner, 36-48 hour or even 3-day water fast.

How to break your fast?

Depending on how long you've been fasting, you'll want to make sure you break your fast slow and easy. I recommend avoiding carbohydrates or foods that will spike insulin and blood sugar. Bone broths and high-fat foods like olives, avocado and nut butter are a great way to go.

Is there ever a time you should stop fasting? Yes! If your ketones get above 7, your blood sugar drops below 40 or you are not feeling well, you should break your fast. You can also try drinking salt water or taking a mineral supplement like [LMNT](#) to help stabilize minerals during fasting.

There are some people who should be cautious about doing this, such as people with adrenal fatigue, complicated health conditions, or women the week before their menstrual cycle (because this is when we need carbs to create hormones).

Don't forget to feast!

Finally, don't forget about FEAST DAYS! Yay! The biggest mistake I see people make when they implement a ketogenic diet or fasting diet is that they forget that their body needs to cycle between feasting and fasting, so make sure you are including hormone and nutrient promoting feast days into your fasting lifestyle.

If you want to learn more, join me on [Instagram](#). Or visit CoachJessLandfair.com

Every month we have a different health and wellness focus including lifestyle adjustments and fasting information. It is a safe space to share questions and thoughts as we all navigate this journey we call LIFE together.

