



Fasting **101**

**The Complete
Guide to Fasting
Do's and Don'ts**

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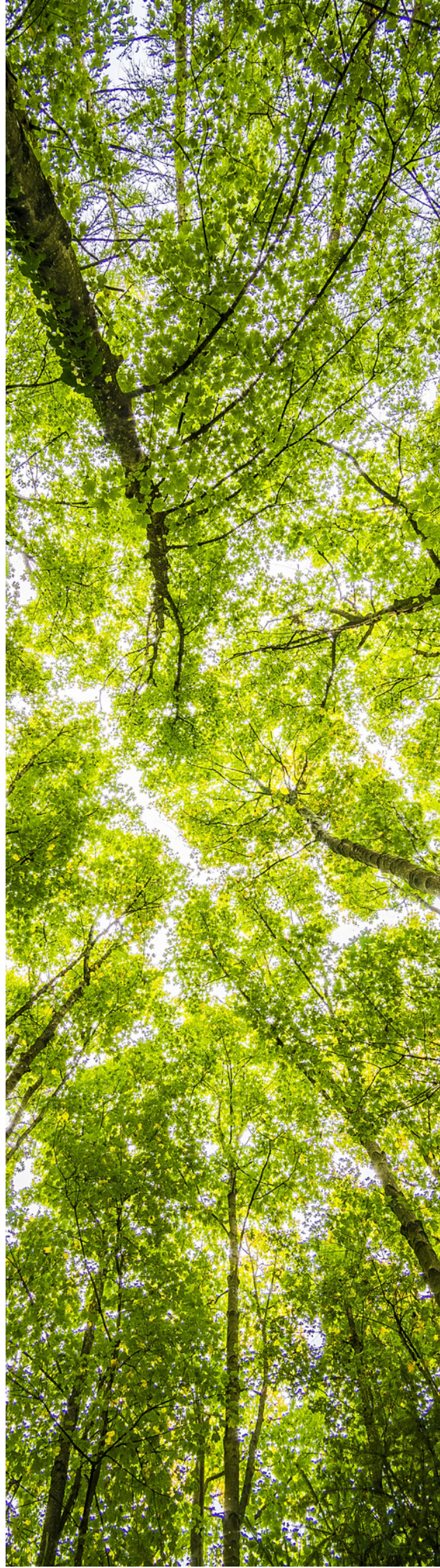
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I am also a Plant-Based Nutrition Certificate graduate from eCornell and am studying for my holistic nutritionist degree. I hope you enjoy my whole food plant-based recipes and practical tips!

You're welcome to download my other free resources:

[Guide to Whole Food Plant-Based Diet](#)
[Guide to Low Glycemic Plant-Based Diet](#)
[Guide to Candida Overgrowth](#)

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WHAT IS FASTING?

If you thought that fasting is simply cutting down on or stopping food intake, you're wrong. Fasting also means the elimination of physical, emotional, and mental toxins from our organism.

When we stop eating and let our stomach to remain empty, the body goes into an elimination cycle. Most people experience some withdrawal symptoms, especially when toxicity exists.

This article covers what is fasting on liquids and what happens when we fast as well as fasting benefits, symptoms, and hazards.

Moreover, you'll learn when to fast, when not to fast, what to consume, and how to safely break a fast.

HAZARDS OF FASTING

- If fasting is overused, it may create depletion and weakness. The body needs the nourishment from food to function after it has used up its stores.
- Excessive weight loss and nutritional deficiencies may occur (more likely with longer water fasts).
- Blood pressure drops and this can lead to dizziness.
- The level of thyroid hormone falls initially but rises again in association with ketosis.
- Female hormone levels fall, and this can lead to a lessening or loss of menstrual flow.
- Cardiac problems can occur with longer fasting, especially when there are pre-existing problems. More of a threat during longer water fasts.

To be on the safe side, have your progress monitored through physical exams, blood tests, and even electrocardiograms.

How much fasting isn't too much? If you've fasted successfully once, you can continue with 1-day fasts weekly and 3-day fasts monthly, and of course, the 12-14 hour fast daily.

Any water-only fast that is longer than 24 hours, particularly those lasting 3 or more days should be done under the supervision of a physician and preferably in a live-in clinic or retreat.

For example, normally your kidneys dive into sodium conservation mode during fasting, but should that response break down, you could rapidly develop an electrolyte abnormality that may only manifest with non-specific symptoms like fatigue or dizziness, which could easily be dismissed until it's too late.

SYMPTOMS DURING A FAST

- Headaches for the first couple of days.
- Irritability, fatigue, dizziness or light-headedness.
- Hunger for the first 2-3 days.
- Most people's tongues will develop white or yellow furry coating, which can be scraped or brushed off.
- Bad breath and tastes in the mouth may occur.
- Also, foul-smelling urine or stools.
- Skin odour or eruptions (such as small spots or painful boils).
- Digestive upset, mucous stools, flatulence, diarrhoea, or even nausea and vomiting.
- Insomnia or bad dreams.
- Hypertension may occur as well as palpitations.
- Feeling that you're about to faint.
- Back pain and pain in general, including abdominal pain.
- Joint stiffness.
- The mind is looking for excuses not to fast.
- Energy may go down every 2 or 3 days as the body excretes more wastes.
- And finally, cold symptoms or sinus congestion.

Most healing crisis pass within 1-2 days. If any symptom lasts longer than 2 or 3 days and/or it worsens or causes concern (such as fainting, heart arrhythmias, or bleeding) the fast should be stopped and a doctor consulted.

Anyone who's in poor health or without fasting experience, should do longer fasts under medical supervision.

BENEFITS OF FASTING

Provided that we are basically well nourished, systematic undereating and fasting are likely the most important contributors to health and longevity.

Fasting is useful for many conditions such as colds, mucus congestion, flus, fever, bronchitis, constipation, indigestion, diarrhoea, back pains caused by muscular tightness and stress, obesity, hypertension, diabetes, fatigue, asthma, environmental allergies, mental illness, insomnia to name a few.

In short, some benefits of fasting include:

- Antiaging effects – much of aging and disease may result from biochemical suffocation, where the cells do not get enough oxygen and nutrients or cannot adequately eliminate their wastes. Fasting helps us decrease this suffocation.
- Better attitude, resistance to disease, and sleep.
- Clearer skin
- Drug detoxification
- Mentally, fasting improves clarity and attentiveness.
- Emotionally, it may make us more sensitive and aware of our feelings.
- Improved senses (vision, hearing, taste)
- More energy and relaxation
- Reduction of allergies
- Rejuvenation
- Rest for digestive organs
- Weight loss
- Short juice cleanses during menstruation may help ease pain and other symptoms

WHO SHOULD NOT FAST

There is a number of conditions in which it is probably too dangerous to attempt extended water fasts. These include:

- Malnourished people should not fast, nor should some overweight people who are undernourished.
- People with fatigue caused by nutrient deficiency.
- In case of eating disorders.
- With degenerative disease of the muscles or bones.
- Underweight people.
- Sluggish individuals who retain water or whose weight is concentrated in their hips and legs often do worse.
- Uncontrolled hyperthyroidism.
- Advanced liver or kidney insufficiency.
- Porphyria that is a group of disorders resulting from a build-up of natural chemicals that produce porphyrin in your body. Porphyrins are essential for the function of hemoglobin — a protein in your red blood cells that links to porphyrin, binds iron, and carries oxygen to your organs and tissues.
- If you have a weak heart or cardiac arrhythmias.
- Pregnant and lactating women.
- People with weakened immunity.
- Before or after surgery.
- Advanced cancer patients.
- In cold weather.
- If you have low blood pressure.
- Mental illness and dementia.
- In case of Cachexia is a “wasting” disorder that causes extreme weight loss and muscle wasting, and can include loss of body fat.

WHEN TO FAST

How do you know if you would benefit from a fast?

You need to pay attention to your energy levels, the degree of congestion, as well as observing your tongue and its coating.

If you're under stress, have been overindulging, or develop congestive symptoms, it's probably best to lighten your diet and possibly cleanse your body.

The best times to fast are spring, summer, and early autumn. It is not recommended to do water fasts in the winter when it's cold.

In winter, instead of water or juice fast, you may do a cleanse with a simple diet of brown rice, vegetables, and miso soup. This can be done for 2-3 weeks even.

PREPARING FOR A FAST

If you want to do a water or a juice fast, take some time for preparing yourself. It can be from a few days to a week. Eliminate unhealthy foods from your diet and habits from your life. Abstain from alcohol, caffeine, nicotine, and sugar.

Also, if you consume animal products, then those could be avoided along with wheat and baked goods 1-2 days before fasting.

You may consume only fruits and vegetables 3-4 days prior to the fast. These slowly detoxify your body so that the actual fast will be less intense.

One possible protocol for the transition would be to have 1 meal a day around 3pm and consume only water, juices, teas and some fresh fruit or veggie snacks at other times. Make sure that the one meal is wholesome and light. For example, a huge green salad with nut or seed-based dressing + some cooked whole grains and legumes, and some cooked veggies and/or greens are fine as well.

No strong detox symptoms should develop if you follow such a plan.

Be ready for not being able to work during the fast, so plan it for the weekend (Saturday or Sunday) or whenever you're off work.

Take a walk, nap when you need to, read a book, play an instrument, sing, whatever is your cup of tea.

Most probably you won't feel great during the 36-hour fast as people usually feel better around day 3. So, a longer fast is necessary to experience that.

The thing is, fasting can be the most difficult for those who need it the most and therefore it is necessary to start with diet changes first.

Pure juice fasts can be done for longer periods of time as well as they provide nutrients, 7-10 days for example. However, you should spend the same number of days preparing for it.

To avoid being impatient, write down a plan before you start the fast so that you have something to adhere to. Also, it's important to make notes/keep a diary about how you feel and experience.

WHAT AND HOW MUCH TO CONSUME

Drink at least 2-3 quarts of water, juices, and herbal teas daily (1.9-2.8 litres).

You can add lemon juice, cayenne pepper and some honey or maple syrup to your water. In fact, this combo is called the Master Cleanser.

The Master Cleanser

2 tbsps. fresh lemon or lime juice

1 tbsp. pure maple syrup (up to 2 tbsps. if you want to drop less weight)

1/10 tsp. cayenne pepper

8oz (227ml) filtered water

Mix and drink 8-12 glasses throughout the day. Keep it in a glass container or a jar or make it fresh each time. Rinse your mouth with water after each glass to prevent the lemon juice from hurting the enamel of your teeth

Drink your fruit and vegetable juices diluted with filtered water, ratio 1:1. Good juices would be carrot, celery, beets, and greens. In addition, soup broths can be used as well. Of course, juices should be made of organic chemical-free produce.

If you can't do organic, the fruits and veggies should be peeled (especially if they're waxed). With root vegetables like carrots and beets the above-ground ends should be cut off.

Other Supplements

You may add some blue-green algae, spirulina, or chlorella to your juices. They provide more energy as they contain high-quality amino acids and are easily assimilated.

On longer water fasts, vitamins and minerals must be supplemented. For example, one can develop scurvy with 4 weeks without any vitamin C. Or, beriberi, thiamine or B1 deficiency, may start out even earlier in fasting patients. Once it manifests, it can result in brain damage within days—which can eventually become irreversible.

HOW TO BREAK A FAST

When to break fast

You should end the fast, if your energy levels go down for more than a day or if your weight gets too low.

If the symptoms are particularly intense or sudden, it is possible that you need food. Tongue coating can be an indicator but not a very good one as some people's tongues may coat very little and others will remain coated even after cleansing.

If in doubt, it is always better to come off the fast and then cleanse again later.

Hunger is also a good indicator. Most people lose interest in food from day 3-7 and then experience real deep-seated hunger again. This is a sign to eat carefully. However, occasionally people are hungry throughout the fast.

The hazards of breaking the fast

Breaking the fast must be well planned and done slowly to prevent any adverse symptoms and sickness.

For example, after World War II, one out of five starved Japanese prisoners of war tragically died following liberation. Now known as "refeeding syndrome," multiorgan system failure can result from resuming a regular diet too quickly. The reason is that there are critical nutrients, such as thiamine and phosphorus, that are used to metabolise food. So, if too much food is taken before these nutrients can be replenished, demand may exceed supply. And whatever residual stores you still carry can be driven down even further, with potentially fatal consequences. That's why rescue workers are taught to always give thiamine before food to victims who had been trapped or otherwise unable to eat.

So don't just go out for dinner but make a gradual transition to your regular, but now bettered diet.

No matter how you start with foods, chew well, don't overeat, and don't mix too many different foods into one meal.

HOW TO BREAK A FAST

Make a plan for breaking the fast

It is suggested to take half of the total cleansing time to move back to your regular foods. The digestion has been resting so it's especially important to chew the food well.

In case you were on water fast, it's wise to prepare the digestion with diluted juices. For example, mixing a few tablespoons of orange juice into a glass of water and progressing to stronger mixtures throughout the day. Diluted fresh grape or orange juice stimulate the digestion.

The European fasting expert Arnold Ehret suggests that fruits and fruit juices should not be used right after a meat eater's first fast because they may coagulate intestinal mucus and cause problems. In case you were on a juice fast, it's easier to transition back to foods. For example, a raw or cooked low-starch vegetable such as spinach or other greens is a good choice. Sauerkraut also helps stimulate the digestion.

Keep the bowels moving

A laxative-type meal can be used to keep the bowels moving – grapes, cherries, soaked or stewed prunes or figs.

Some experts say that the bowels should move within 1-2 hours after the first meal and, if not, an enema should be used.

Some people do a saltwater flush before the first day of food by drinking 1 quart (946ml) of water containing 2 tsps of dissolved sea salt. However, it does not work well for everyone. And it's not recommended for salt-sensitive or water-retaining people or for those with hypertension.

HOW TO BREAK A FAST

Which foods are the best to break the fast with

Start with salads or steamed veggies and eat fruits alone.

By the second food day most people tolerate well-cooked watery brown rice or millet. From there, progress slowly through grains and veggies. Also, some nuts, seeds or legumes can be added at this point.

Reintroducing foods will give you a valuable insight of how your body reacts to different foods. Use this time to self-observe and discover specific food-intolerances (if any). If you respond poorly to a certain food, avoid it for a week or so and then eat it alone to see how it feels.

JUICES FOR SPECIFIC ORGANS & CONDITIONS

Fruit Juices

Apple: liver, intestines.

Black cherry: colon, menstrual problems, gout.

Citrus: cardiovascular disease (CVD), obesity, haemorrhoids, varicose veins.

Grape: colon, anemia.

Lemon: liver, gallbladder, allergies, asthma, CVD, colds.

Papaya: stomach, indigestion, haemorrhoids, colitis.

Pear: gallbladder.

Pineapple: allergies, arthritis, inflammation, edema, haemorrhoids.

Watermelon: kidneys, edema.

Vegetable Juices

Beet greens: gallbladder, liver, osteoporosis.

Beets: blood, liver, menstrual problems, arthritis.

Cabbage: colitis, ulcers.

Carrots: eyes, arthritis, osteoporosis.

Celery: kidneys, diabetes, osteoporosis.

Comfrey: intestines, hypertension, osteoporosis.

Cucumber: edema, diabetes.

Garlic: allergies, colds, hypertension, CVD, high fats, diabetes.

Greens: CVD, skin, eczema, digestive problems, obesity, breath.

Jerusalem artichokes: diabetes.

Parsley: kidneys, edema, arthritis.

Potatoes: intestines, ulcer.

Radish: liver, high fats, obesity.

Spinach: anemia, eczema.

Watercress: anemia, colds.

Wheatgrass: anemia, liver, intestines, breath.

AUTUMN REJUVENATION SOUP

Recipe by Bethany Argisle

3 cups filtered water
1 tbsp. ginger root, chopped
1-2 tbsps. miso paste (do not boil)
1-2 stalks green onion, chopped
Cilantro, to taste, chopped
1-2 pinches cayenne pepper
2 tsps. extra virgin olive oil (optional)
Juice of half a lemon

Directions:

Boil water. Add ginger root. Simmer for 10 minutes.

Stir in miso paste to taste. Turn off the burner.

Then add green onion, some cilantro, cayenne, oil, and lemon juice.

Remove and cover to steep for 10 minutes.

You may vary the ingredient portions according to your preferences. Enjoy!

PRINCIPALS OF HEALTHY FASTING

Finally, a few more aspects you might consider for healthy fasting:

- Get plenty of fresh air and sunshine.
- Bathing, showers, steam and even saunas are good.
- Dry brushing before shower helps clear toxins from the skin.
- Exercise supports the cleansing process. Walking, cycling, swimming can be done. Feel your energy levels though. If you need to rest, rest.
- Avoid all drugs, also caffeine, alcohol, and nicotine. Only mandatory prescription drugs may be taken. If you take any medication, you should advise your doctor anyway before starting a fast.
- Nutritional supplements can be taken during a fast. Although if it's a short one, 1-3 days, it's not necessary. Psyllium husks can be taken as part of colon detox program. Also, green barley, chlorella, and spirulina may enhance vitality and help with purification. For extended fasts, you might consider some mineral support and/or vitamin C in powdered form.
- Now, some form of bowel stimulation is recommended. Enemas can be done every other day. Herbal laxatives are often taken during fasts – cascara sagrada, senna leaves, liquorice root, buckthorn, rhubarb root, aloe vera. There's also the saltwater flush that I mentioned previously.
- Make yourself busy, work and be creative! Of course, if you have the energy.
- Clean your home – I somehow felt the urge to clean while fasting.
- We may join others in fasting or ask your family members to do it with you.
- Avoid people who might be negative towards your fasting.
- Meditate and relax.

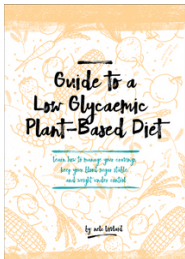
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