

# How fasting will benefit body and soul

## The many facets of fasting

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As the world of conventional medicine evolved, functional medicine blossomed. It focuses on patient-centered versus disease-centered approach. This discipline includes the importance of spiritual health in addressing the root cause of a patient's medical condition in addition to diet and nutrition, movement and exercise, stress management, sleep and relaxation, relationships, as well as mental and emotional health. While functional medicine does not promote and favor a specific type of religion, taking the patient's spiritual history and assessing spiritual health are highly encouraged among clinicians. Fasting is considered a spiritual discipline in many religions such as Christianity and Islam. Since the ancient times, fasting has been practiced mainly for spiritual purposes.

The Israelites were enslaved by the Egyptians for 400 years before Moses led the great exodus and their people were liberated. During those times, the Israelites recorded the times they consecrated themselves before a battle, attaining victory, or receiving a blessing. To consecrate means to officially promise or

dedicate your time and attention to something or someone. It is a period of abstaining usually from food but also other activities such as sexual intercourse.

In modern setting, spiritual fasting may not only restrict food and sexual activities. It could also be abstinence from activities that may distract you, be it going on a digital detox from social media, your fave K-drama, or the like. The main goal is to focus on God. Instead of spending your time on the usual activities that you do such as eating, you fast and allot that time for prayer, worship, or meditating on God's Word. Given the numerous studies on the therapeutic benefits of fasting on the body, we can safely say that what is good for the body is also good for the soul.

In recent years, fasting has become popular as part of weight management strategies. Researches have shown, however, that the benefits of fasting go beyond just making one lose weight. Here are some types of fasting:

**Intermittent fasting.** Food is consumed in cycles of food restriction and non-restriction. This is a broad term since there are various ways to do intermittent fasting. It could be time-restricted, alternate day fasting, or 5:2 diet.

**Time-restricted feeding or eating.** This is also known as prolonged nightly fasting. Time-restricted feeding follows the body clock or circadian rhythm. Consumption of food and beverages are not allowed at night. Fasting overnight can range between 12 and 20 hours.

**Alternate day fasting.** A cycle of having no food intake for 24 hours but allows water intake during the fasting day, and resuming feeding the next day, regardless of time and amount consumed. Others may include coffee, tea, and some mineral supplementation added to the beverages or water.

**5:2 diet** – This way of fasting restricts calories or food intake for two consecutive days followed by five days of unrestricted feeding. Fasting days will have only around 25 percent of usual food intake, which is very low calorie. If you are consuming 2,000 calories a day, that means only 500 kcal is eaten during fasting.

Aside from intermittent fasting, a scientifically developed and clinically tested fasting method was developed by a research team from the University of Southern California led by Dr. Valter Longo, director of the Longevity Institute at the University of Southern California – Leonard Davis School of Gerontology in Los Angeles. It is one of the leading centers for research on aging and age-related diseases.

Dr. Longo developed the Fasting Mimicking Diet, a five-day program that feeds you with low calorie, healthy natural food ingredients that are plant-based. Since the body does not recognize that it is being fed, it goes into a fasting mode while being nourished. During the period of fasting, the body goes into ketosis and breaks down body fat and visceral or abdominal fat, reduces inflammatory markers like C-reactive protein related to heart diseases, and also stimulates the natural production of stem cells in the body on the fourth and fifth day.

Fasting in general can be therapeutic, especially if it is aligned with your circadian rhythm. Hormones that help in the body's metabolism and utilization of nutrients are produced and released at certain times of the day. Individuals who tend to eat late at night have a higher risk for developing fatty liver disease, insulin resistance, and other illnesses. This could be due to the reduced production of the hormone insulin that is needed for glucose or sugar regulation. The sleep hormone melatonin produced at night to make you sleep decreases the production of insulin. After all, you are supposed to be sleeping and resting instead of eating at night.

Fasting, however, is not for everyone. If you are anemic, suffering

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from hyperacidity, have below normal weight or BMI, and have other medical conditions, it is best to consult your physician. Before you get into any fasting program, consult a registered nutritionist dietitian for proper guidance and prevent nutrient deficiencies and malnutrition that will be detrimental to your health.