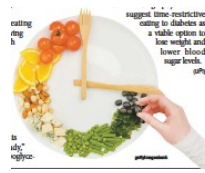


Intermittent fasting effective alternative for weight loss

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Researchers at the University of Illinois Chicago found in a new study that intermittent fasting, in which people only eat during a specific stretch each day, appears to be more effective than limiting calories.



The study, which examined helping people with Type 2 diabetes lose weight and control their blood sugar levels, was published Friday in online journal JAMA Network Open.

Intermittent fasting, also known as time-restrictive eating, appeared to be an effective way to lose weight in a study of 75 people studied by the University of Illinois Chicago scientists.

Researchers said participants who ate only during an eight-hour window between noon and 8 p.m. each day lost more weight over six months than participants who were instructed to reduce their calorie intake by 25 percent.

Those groups saw similar reductions in longterm blood sugar levels after they were measured by a test of hemoglobin A1C, which shows blood sugar levels over the past three months.

“Our study shows that time-restricted eating might be an effective alternative to traditional dieting for people who can’t do the traditional diet or are burned out on it,” said senior author Krista Varady, a professor in the Department of Kinesiology and Nutrition at the University of Illinois Cancer Center.

“For many people trying to lose weight, counting time is easier than counting calories,” Varady said in a news release.

For the study, the participants were broken down into three groups — those who followed the time-restricted eating rules; those who reduced calories; and a control group.

Various health indicators were measured over a six-month period, including weight, waist circumference and blood sugar levels.

Varady said the time-restricted eating group likely had an easier time following their routines because patients with diabetes are generally told to cut back on calories by their doctors as a first line of defense.

The researchers said that while the participants in the time-restricted eating group were not instructed to reduce their calorie intake, they ended up doing so by eating within a fixed window.

“There were no serious adverse events reported during the six-month study,” researchers said. “Occurrences of hypoglycemia (low blood sugar) and hyperglycemia (high blood sugar) did not differ between the diet groups and control groups.”

One in 10 U.S. residents suffer from diabetes today and some suspect that will rise dramatically to 1 in 3 by 2050. More than half of the participants in the study were Black and another 40 percent were Hispanic.

Varady stressed that the results should encourage a larger investigation in the future and should encourage physicians to suggest time-restrictive eating to diabetes as a viable option to lose weight and lower blood sugar levels.