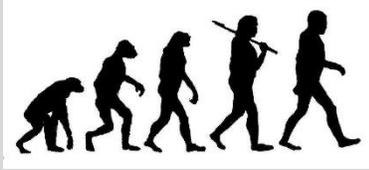




The Benefits of Fasting

livingalignedhealthcoach.com or livingalignedhc@gmail.com



Intermittent Fasting is becoming common language these days. Many people still believe to fast is to suffer. Is it very possible that fasting is imprinted in our genes and it is not as difficult to adapt to or to benefit from?

I personally intermittent fast every day. I usually follow a 16hr fast to 8hr eating window. Not because I chose to, but because I removed unhealthy highly processed carbohydrates like sugars and grains, as well as highly processed industrial oils. I replaced those foods with whole natural foods and healthy oils. I found that in doing so, I was not nearly as hungry, making the move to intermittent fasting just happen. Either that or I would have to force myself to eat 😊.

The Origins of Fasting

Humans have lived in the hunter-gatherer phase, as opposed to the agricultural or industrial phase, for approximately 99% of their existence. In that hunter-gatherer phase, food had to be found and either killed or picked or dug up, and then cooked, before it could be eaten. Since there was no refrigeration, canning, or any other means of food preservation beyond smoking or drying, hunter-gatherers simply could not eat whenever they wanted to, in contrast to today.

Among surviving hunter-gatherer tribes that have been studied, and using data from historical records, we've discovered that the usual practice among these peoples was (or is) to hunt and gather during the day, and to eat a large meal at night after the food had been prepared. Hunter-gatherers do not eat breakfast, lunch, dinner, and snacks. As a result, these people are lean, fit, and do not die of the diseases of civilization like heart disease and diabetes.

Intermittent fasting is the natural rhythm of eating of primitive peoples. Could we perhaps learn something from that? It was that time of switching between feeding and

fasting, which lasted perhaps a couple million years, to which our genes are adapted. When we live in a way to which our genes are not adapted, we experience illness, including diabetes, obesity, cancer, heart disease, arthritis, gout, acne, and many others.

Most of the world's religions, including Judaism, Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam, have prescribed fasting to help become more spiritual. In the medical realm, fasting has been known as a treatment for epilepsy, ADHD and even assisting through cancer treatment.

In the medical field, since the time of Hippocrates over 2,000 years ago, fasting has been known as an effective treatment for epilepsy and many other disorders. Only very recently has this practice begun to receive the attention of biomedical researchers, and what they've found is that fasting can have profoundly beneficial effects on health.

What went wrong?

Conventional dietary advice claims, you must eat every few hours. So, most people eat three (or more) meals plus snacks every day.

Over the past few decades, mainstream diet authorities have even advised that you should eat small amounts almost constantly, a practice that has come to be known as grazing. The idea behind grazing is that one will keep blood sugars in a normal range and metabolism high by eating all the time.

Grazing has been proven to be the worst dietary advice ever given, since by keeping the hormone insulin at higher levels constantly, and encouraging higher caloric intake, all it does is make people fat. Grazing never allows the normal bodily rhythm of feeding and fasting to take place. With grazing, we're always in what scientists refer to as the "fed state". Blood sugar and insulin rise when you eat, and if you graze, they never completely decline, which leads to fat storage, not fat burn.

Why fasting promotes health

It's been known for thousands of years that fasting can promote health. However, science couldn't provide a satisfactory answer as to the cause of fasting's effects on health. The knowledge that fasting was good for us and could treat certain illnesses came strictly from observations of its effects on individuals. With the development of the modern scientific method, scientists could probe the effects of intermittent fasting. But they first discovered the effects of giving animals less food. With the use of laboratory animals, scientists studying aging discovered that restricting food by 30% or more allowed animals to live much longer than when they were fed without restriction. The scientist Clive McCay discovered the anti-aging effects of limited feeding, or as it's commonly known, calorie restriction. He discovered this in the 1930s. Scientists have since extensively tested the effects of calorie restriction (CR), CR is an effective anti-aging process. It appears to be effective on virtually every animal tested, from yeast and worms to rodents and primates. The reasons for the effects of CR are still intensively researched, leading to the understanding that CR causes a stress response in the organism that leads to better health and longer life.

Stress that leads to better health is known as hormesis.

Drawbacks to Calorie Restriction (CR)

CR has some serious drawbacks, however. One is that animals that are forced to do with less food are hungry all the time. When fed, they eat their food all at once. Experiencing a constant state of hunger is not something most people want to do. I don't and I am sure you feel the same way. Living in a state of constant hunger requires an iron will, besides being unpleasant. Constant hunger is one of the reasons that calorie-counting fails consistently. Another drawback is that people who restrict their calories report feeling cold all the time due to a lower metabolic rate, and they often report less energy, lower libido, and just all around not feeling so great. Finally, constant calorie restriction, especially if not done precisely and perfectly, can lead to frailty, muscle and bone loss, and lower immune function.

How Intermittent Fasting Beats CR

Fortunately, intermittent fasting is a method that has all the benefits of CR but virtually none of the drawbacks is possible. Animals that are fasted intermittently eat virtually the same amount of food as ad lib fed animals, they merely eat that food at different times.

Weakness, lowered immune function, or wasting of muscle and bone is therefore not an issue with fasting. Neither is feeling cold, or having a low sex drive.

Even while consuming the same amount of food, intermittent fasting decreases blood sugar and insulin levels, which means that insulin resistance, the primary issue in diabetes and obesity, decreases. Since diabetes is associated with much higher risks of heart disease and cancer, the insulin-lowering effect of intermittent fasting decreases the risk of these diseases. Intermittent fasting also increases the resistance of neurons to excitotoxic injury, which happens because it increases stress defense mechanisms in the brain and nervous system. Fasting also increases levels of brain-derived neurotrophic factor (BDNF), which has beneficial effects on mood and cognition, which may be why fasting has so often been recommended by the world's religions. BDNF also improves glucose metabolism and mitochondrial energy and may even increase brain volume.

Animals maintained on a fasting regimen show increased resistance to myocardial infarction (heart attack) and stroke. Most people are interested in the power of intermittent fasting to fight obesity. In one scientific study, mice that were bred to be genetically obese became fitter while on this fasting regimen. In lean-bred mice, those that could eat ad lib became obese, but the mice on the fasting regimen remained lean and in good shape.

Human data on intermittent fasting

I'm sure you would rather know if the benefits applied to humans generally rather than just mice. Humans and mice share mammalian biochemistry and physiology, so as we would expect, science shows that humans benefit from intermittent fasting too. This has been known for some time. In 1962, a group of doctors used intermittent fasting

for "Correction and Control of Intractable Obesity" ([Ref 1](#)). The doctors found that total fasting caused a weight loss of about 2.5 pounds (1.1 kg) a day. The obese subjects fasted for several days at a time; after satisfactory weight loss, the study group found that shorter periods of fasting were enough to maintain the weight loss.

It was found that after the first day, the subjects lost their appetite, and they did so to the degree that ketones appeared in their blood. This shows that in intermittent fasting, hunger is much less of an issue than with dieting. Ketones are a response to either fasting or a very low carbohydrate diet; the body produces and uses them from stored fat when the lack of carbohydrates means that there's no glucose available. This has the effect of sparing muscle tissue. Ketones also prolong lifespan in animals, so ketones are likely one of the ways in which calorie restriction and fasting promote health. Also note worthy in fasting in humans, "A sense of well-being was associated with the fast." The subjects felt good.

More recently (2011), a review of the effectiveness of intermittent fasting versus daily calorie restriction (i.e. a standard reducing diet) found that fasting was at least as effective as diet, with the important side benefit that fasting caused less muscle loss than dieting.

Muscle Loss

This result is very important, since standard dieting typically causes the loss of lots of muscle; the rule of thumb is that one-fourth to one-third of weight loss due to dieting is lean mass, mostly muscle. Muscle loss is an unhealthy process, as losing muscle means having less of one of the body's most metabolically active tissues.

In most cases, dieters who lose muscle will never get that muscle back, unless they are very dedicated, lift weights and eat right. Better not to lose muscle in the first place. With intermittent fasting, muscle loss is much less of a problem. If you combine intermittent fasting with a couple or more sessions a week of weight training, virtually no muscle loss will occur; all the weight loss is fat. This is much healthier than regular dieting, since fat tissue leads to metabolic illness, and more muscle makes for better metabolic health – better insulin sensitivity, control of blood sugar, and better aerobic capacity.

Examples of Fasting Plans

TIME-RESTRICTED FEEDING

16:8



FAST
16 Hours



EAT
8 Hours

WHOLE-DAY FASTING

5:2



SUN



MON



TUES



WED



THURS



FRI



SAT

ALTERNATE-DAY FASTING

36:12



FAST
36 Hours



EAT
12 Hours

Conclusion

It seems fasting is so much simpler and, in many ways, easier than standard, calorie-reduced diets. [\(Ref 2\)](#)

Instead of constantly thinking about, and planning for, your next meal, fasting merely requires a set time without food. This eliminates a great deal of the psychological difficulty in dieting. In addition, the longer you fast, the less hungry you are. This result seems counterintuitive, and it seems most people when they first hear of fasting, think it's crazy.

We have become so ingrained in thinking we need to eat every few hours. Almost everyone eats constantly, and you can see for yourself what the average person looks like, so it stands to reason, to lose fat and become lean and fit, you should do the opposite of what most people do.

I hope you enjoyed this post 😊

Living Aligned Health Coach Service

Thank you for taking the time read this post. If you find any of the information valuable and would like to find out more information regarding the benefits a health coach can provide, or if you are interested in setting up a consultation. Contact Vern Gorman at livingalignedhc@gmail.com or through the website www.livingalignedhealthcoach.com