

# Intermittent Fasting- The May Way

A simple guide to get you  
started including a 7-day  
meal plan

# Let me introduce myself!



As a Masters qualified UK-registered Nutritionist (mBANT) and a real woman with a busy family life, I am here to share with you a simple, no-nonsense approach when it comes to ensuring your health, whilst embarking on an Intermittent Fasting approach to eating and meal choices backed up with expert qualified recommendations. I believe in easy, practical, achievable food that's tasty and works for the whole family.

Intermittent Fasting is backed up with good scientific research and is simple to grasp. This beginner's guide will help you understand the concept, the benefits and get you started on this new way of eating.

I live by the advice I offer and regularly fast as a way of life. It's an easy way to lose or maintain my weight and I've never felt better!

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SIMPLE STEPS TO A HEALTHIER LIFESTYLE

## INTERMITTENT FASTING - THE MAY WAY

Fasting is gathering momentum in popularity. All the rage, it is the latest health buzzword when it comes to our health; going for hours at a time without food is certainly more acceptable nowadays and indeed is even considered fashionable amongst some. However, with any health trend, it is important to understand exactly how your choices are affecting your body and above all, ensuring you are not doing any harm.

The benefits of restricting calories on health and extending life span are well established. Fasting has been used for thousands of years for spiritual and health benefits and has become popular in recent times due to the celebrity endorsement of intermittent fasting, aka the '5:2 fast diet'!

Although dietary advice has long focused on eating regular low-fat meals, Intermittent Fasting and the 5:2's counterintuitive approach to weight loss has attracted thousands of women and men. Fasting for weight loss is a well kept secret in the world of nutrition but it is not always clear how this can be achieved safely and effectively.

Biologically, in the absence of a health condition, there is no reason why we must eat regularly. It is absolutely safe to leave long gaps between meals and if you find that you are energised and feel good, there is no reason why you can't fast every day, provided you ensure a healthy balanced intake of nutrients and it fits with your lifestyle.

PLEASE NOTE: If you are under the care of a doctor or other health professional, it is important to consult with them before embarking on the significant changes in eating habits that Intermittent Fasting entails

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## Why Fasting.....? It helps with weight loss

Weight loss tends to be the most common reason for Intermittent Fasting. Whilst we may be familiar with the notion that "not all calories are equal", it still remains that caloric restriction plays a vital role in achieving weight loss and maintaining this weight loss.

This fasting approach works on the notion of restricting your energy intake to certain times and in doing so, the research suggests it to be an effective way to lose body fat. After a meal, the digestive system processes the food you have just eaten; digesting and absorbing, so that the body can use the nutrients the food has provided.

This process takes around 4 to 5 hours, during which time the body will prioritise using the carbohydrates provided as part of this meal as its preferred energy source, rather than rely on fat stored in the body. Following a meal, insulin levels will be high and when insulin levels are high, the body is less likely to use fat as fuel. However, after this point, the body will need to use its fat stores as a source of energy, which will result in weight loss.

If you are addictive by nature and portion control is a struggle, it is important to consider that eating huge, calorific meals whilst Intermittent Fasting will not work, if ultimately you are eating more calories than you are using up. The notion of "Calories In vs Calories Out" still holds true and must be considered carefully with meal choices.

## Why Fasting.....? It can improve glucose tolerance

When the diet is high in sugar, the body is over-burdened as it ensures the excess glucose is removed from the blood.

Insulin resistance is generally caused as a result of the body's reduced ability to remove excess glucose from the blood, either because insufficient insulin is released (from the pancreas) or the insulin receptors have become less sensitive.

Glucose is needed as a primary source of energy and as such carbohydrates consumed in the diet will be converted to glucose and used for energy. Once the body has satisfied its energy requirements, excess glucose will be converted to fat and stored in tissues that are not completely suitable for fat storage. As the body uses fat as a fuel during intermittent fasting, fat stores will reduce allowing the cells to regain insulin function and glucose sensitivity.

Studies show that Intermittent Fasting can improve many health parameters especially in pre-diabetic and insulin resistant people, where a caloric restriction can avoid the need to use medication. Further findings also suggest that short term intermittent fasting may be a safe and tolerable dietary intervention for those already diagnosed with Type 2 Diabetes and may improve body weight and fasting glucose levels.

Eating patterns that focus on 3 meals a day as well as snacks (often sweet) in between present an increased risk of insulin resistance and glucose intolerance.

## Why Fasting.....? It helps establish a simple routine

Although it can be difficult to establish a new way of eating in conjunction with family or work commitments at the outset, once you've developed a plan that works, tweaking and adjusting to suit your lifestyle, it'll soon simply become the way you eat, in terms of timings and good quality meal choices.

Understanding your body's genuine hunger signals and not confusing them with cravings often associated with the consumption of too many processed foods, will give you greater understanding of your body and improve your confidence to maintain healthy habits.

Having a regular routine, with strict eating times, can simplify your day to day life especially if you're feeling good for it. As you are not preparing a number of meals and snacks, you only need to focus on the 2 meals you are likely to eat in one day. If carefully considered, these can also work for the whole family.

## Why Fasting.....? It improves your skin health

Many skin conditions can be alleviated by eating a good quality diet, high in vegetables and fibre and avoiding processed foods.

To ensure adequate nutrients with Intermittent Fasting, you will need to avoid pro-inflammatory foods that offer little nutritive value, such as processed foods or ready meals and in doing so, you will reduce inflammation, often associated with skin conditions such as acne and eczema.

Furthermore, if you suspect your skin condition is exacerbated by a specific food sensitivity or intolerance, eliminating this food during a fast will offer you the opportunity to re-introduce a food one at a time afterwards, to establish if it is indeed the culprit.

## How to fast for weight loss?

Around 12 hours after the last morsel of food, when the meal has been completely processed and absorbed and assuming no further food has been eaten, the body goes into a fasting state. It is no longer burning the energy from the food that has been consumed. At this point, the body has a chance to rebalance and it will need to rely on its fat stores for energy to keep the body natural processes working efficiently. It is only at this stage that the body will start to release fat for use as fuel and this will result in weight loss.

As we all carry significant fat stores, even if you are considered slim, there is always this source of energy to use up when the usual source, sugar, has been used up as it has been during a fasting period.

**Intermittent Fasting should be viewed as a long term lifestyle choice rather than a crash diet**

## INTERMITTENT FASTING - THE MAY WAY

With modern eating patterns relying on not only 3 meals a day but often with snacks in between, it is easy to see how this fasting state is rarely achieved.

This therefore also means that insulin levels are invariably high as a result of this regular eating pattern, increasing the burden on the pancreas, which is the organ that releases insulin, as well as putting increased pressure on the insulin receptors that are bombarded with insulin throughout the day.

There is also huge pressure within the food and snack industry to ensure that we do not allow ourselves to go hungry which is not necessarily advice that is aimed at improving the health of us, the consumer, but fuelled by commercial reasons.

These reasons, amongst others, have contributed to the rise in the development of Type 2 Diabetes in recent years.

Thus a simple shift in our eating patterns can result in not only a reduction in the number of calories consumed, which helps our “calories in vs calories out” energy balance equation, but also provides the body with a chance to recuperate and rebalance without having to focus on the digestive process and therefore reduce the risk of developing Type 2 Diabetes.

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## Working fasting into your life

Intermittent Fasting should be viewed as a long term lifestyle choice rather than a crash diet. Otherwise, it is likely that you will regain any weight lost if you resume your original eating habits.

It is also essential that you make healthy food choices; ensuring good nutrition is vital when fasting to ensure the body's processes are taking place efficiently and effectively.

Planning your meals is key, to make sure you are getting adequate nutrients is very important.

A big problem can be establishing how to make it work for you; factoring in your work and family life, exercise schedule and health priorities and goals.

Thus, I have simplified your choices and have focused on 2 specific approaches to Intermittent Fasting that I consider the most straightforward and easy to implement into your lifestyle.

Quite simply; The Daily Approach or The Weekly Approach.

After all, if it isn't a simple concept, you are unlikely to succeed in your desire to incorporate this new way of eating.

## The Daily Approach

The simple concept is to aim to fast every day for 16-18 hours a day and only consume your food in the remaining 6-8 hours.

For example, if you eat your evening meal at 6:00pm and you have finished by 7pm, then you would not eat your next meal until at least 1:00pm the following day, allowing an 18 hour fast in between. In this way, you are effectively skipping breakfast.

Or you can eat your first meal (breakfast) at 8:00am and a late lunch by 4:00pm and then effectively skip dinner until the following morning's breakfast at 8:00am

## The Weekly Approach

This approach suggests that you eat normally five days a week and diet two, preferably consecutive, days a week, reducing your calorie intake for those two days to a  $\frac{1}{4}$  of their normal level (500 calories for women, 600 for men).

As long as you avoid bingeing for five days and starving for the other two, evidence suggests this can be effective as part of a longer-term weight management strategy.

## Putting Intermittent Fasting into practice

At the outset, transitioning to eating "on demand" to restricting your intake of food can feel very difficult, but I can assure you that after a few days, you and your body will quickly become accustomed to this new way of eating and you will begin to feel the benefits very soon after. Initially you may find that not satisfying your expectation of food, for example first thing in the morning, may leave you feeling tired and even in a bad mood. Once your mindset is adjusted and you no longer have the expectation, your retrained body (and brain) will naturally adjust and leave you feeling energised and invigorated. Trust me, this happened to me!

To start with, increase the gap between dinner and breakfast. If you're not hungry you could skip breakfast altogether; going from dinner to lunch works best.

Consider the ideal ratio of 16:8 hours that works for you. This means you'd be eating a lower-calorie but nutrient dense diet within the eight-hour window. Typically, this would be from midday until eight o'clock at night. Spread this period over two meals and then fast until lunch the following day.

Repeat this routine at least two to three times per week. If you feel hungry any time outside of the eight-hour window, distract yourself with an activity or task so that you're not so aware of the hunger pangs. Gradually increase the number of days you fast if desired.

If you're opting for the weekly approach, do not fast for longer than three days in a row to avoid a significant reduction in your metabolism and to protect against muscle loss.

If you've embarked on this approach on a long-term basis, including a cheat day every now and again is not a problem!

## Before you begin

Monitoring your progress is important to keep you motivated from the start and feeling great and achieving your goals will be your best inspiration

At the outset.....

Take photos; full body – this will help you track any changes in physique achieved as a result of weight loss and a generally more healthy lifestyle

Weigh yourself – although not a definitive guide, a reduction on the scales will also provide motivation

Take waist and hip measurements and calculate your waist to hip ratio

Over time, you will be able to track the changes and then consider if this approach is for you!

## Exercise

Factoring in a daily brisk walk will help to speed up your metabolism and maintain muscle mass.

It is important to consider that exercise needs fuel in the form of food, so if you're including more intense workouts whilst Intermittent fasting, you will need to ensure you structure your exercising so that it fits with your eating habits. Essentially you will still need to focus on the timing of your meal but the food choices may differ according to how intense you will be exercising or working out.

If you've been fasting, consider a lower intensity workout; you should be able to carry on a conversation easily. Listen to your body and stop exercising if you feel light-headed or dizzy. Save your higher intensity workouts until after you've eaten and perhaps include more carbohydrates in your meal if you are planning a tougher workout.

# 7-DAY MEAL PLAN

CHOOSE EITHER A BREAKFAST OR LIGHT LUNCH OPTION AS WELL AS MAIN MEAL CHOICE. RECIPES FOR THE MEALS IN CAPITALS CAN BE FOUND ON MY WEBSITE

## DAY 1

- Porridge oats made with (any) milk, grated apple, cinnamon and sprinkle flaked almonds OR
- BUTTERBEAN AND TOMATO BRUSCHETTA
- Wild salmon fillet steamed with broccoli, sugar snap peas, bok choy, ginger, soy sauce. 1/2 portion of buckwheat noodles

## DAY 2

- 2 Poached eggs & half an avocado mashed with lemon & chilli flakes on 1 slice sourdough toast OR
- SPICY LENTIL & TOMATO SOUP 2 tsp plus homemade hummus/aubergine dip with 2 oatcakes
- Turkey breast marinated in lemon juice, olive oil & herbs, baked with cherry tomatoes. Served with steamed green beans and 1/2 small small/medium sweet potato

## DAY 3

- 2 eggs, scrambled, with mushrooms, spinach & tomato OR
- Pea, prawn & watercress salad with a dressing of olive oil, lemon & dijon mustard
- AUBERGINE, CHICKPEA & TOMATO STEW with a small handful of crumbled feta and 2 tbsp cooked brown rice

## DAY 4

- Porridge (organic oats), handful or raspberries or blueberries, cinnamon and 25g pumpkin seeds OR
- 2 egg Spanish omelette with red peppers & spring onion with a rocket & tomato side salad
- Roast cod on spiced puy lentils, with roasted cherry tomatoes, steamed tenderstem broccoli and green beans

## DAY 5

- SHAKSHUKA with 2 eggs OR
- Tinned sardines/or homemade mackerel pate with 2 oatcakes topped with cherry tomatoes & cucumber & carrot sticks
- Stir-fry chicken breast with broccoli, spring onions, mushrooms, red pepper, chilli, garlic, ginger & soy and 2tbsp cooked brown rice

# 7-DAY MEAL PLAN

CHOOSE EITHER A BREAKFAST OR LIGHT LUNCH OPTION AS WELL AS MAIN MEAL CHOICE

## DAY 6

- OVERNIGHT OATS topped with fresh (or defrosted frozen) berries OR
- QUINOA & LENTIL TABBOULEH salad
- Baked salmon fillet marinated in lemon & fresh herbs, with roasted red onion, courgette, red peppers, aubergine, garlic and 2tbsp cooked quinoa

## DAY 7

- 2-3 tbsp natural Greek yoghurt, 25g mixed seeds with berries OR
- Mixed bean salad with tuna & lemon vinaigrette on a bed of rocket
- Grilled harissa (cayenne, smoked paprika & lemon marinade) chicken breast, with homemade tomato & avocado salsa (with red onion, coriander, parsley, lemon, olive oil) and 2tbsp cooked quinoa

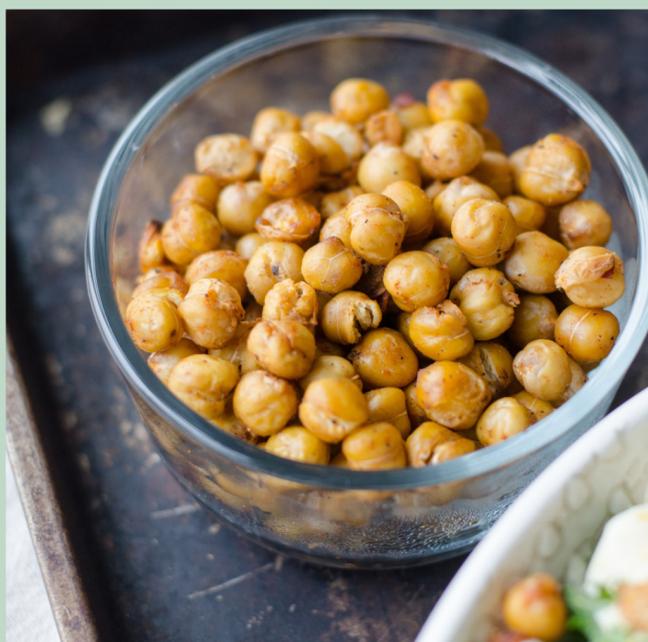
## A FEW POINTERS

- Aim to make up 1/2 your plate with vegetables, out of the other half, 1/4 - 2/3 should be protein and 1/4 or 1/3 carbohydrates
- Include at least 2-3 varieties of vegetables with each meal
- Carbohydrate foods include bread, rice, pasta, potatoes and other starchy vegetables such as butternut squash, sweet potato & parsnip
- Include a maximum of 2 portions of fruit per day
- When making up a salad, try to include at least 5 varieties e.g. lettuce leaves/rocket/watercress/tomatoes/cucumber/radishes/olives/carrots/spring onions/asparagus/avocado
- Include more legumes such as chickpeas, lentils, butterbeans. These are also protein foods and good sources of fibre
- Protein foods include: beef, lamb, pork, ham, chicken, turkey, duck, fish, eggs, cheese
- Try to include more oily fish such as salmon, mackerel, anchovies, sardines, herring, tuna (fresh), pilchards - rich in essential fats
- Eggs and Dairy are ideal protein foods if you're looking to reduce meat e.g. cheese, milk, eggs, Cottage Cheese, Feta (Greek), yoghurt-probiotic/live
- Nuts and Seeds are a good source of essential fats as well as protein/fibre

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For more nutrient-rich power meals, take a look at this recipe collection, which are ideal to include as part of an Intermittent Fasting plan - **CLICK ON THE PICS BELOW**  
"9 Nourishing Snacks that Energise, Satisfy & Banish Cravings"



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