

## Chapter 1

# Fasting — Nature's Ultimate Fat-Burning Secret Weapon

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### *In This Chapter*

- ▶ Discovering what fasting is
  - ▶ Understanding what fasting can do for you
  - ▶ Recognizing who should and shouldn't fast
  - ▶ Determining whether or not fasting is right for you
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**A**lmost any diet works, for a period of time. Because at root, all diets operate on the same premises — calorie restriction. Though many try to deny this plain and simple fact, it's quite undeniable. If you take in fewer calories than you get rid of, you will lose weight. It's inevitable.

You don't need to eat healthy to lose weight, believe it or not. You need only to eat less. But we don't recommend that you cut your intake of sandwich cookies in half, from ten to five, because being healthy is more than just losing weight. In other words you can be thin and unhealthy.

A good diet is an economical one. It contains no unnecessary foods and no unnecessary meals, which means you're judicious about your food quality and also your food quantity. As a result, you should omit needless foods, which means anything you ingest that that will either make you more or less healthy. If a food doesn't directly benefit you, then you should omit it. Many good books discuss the importance of food quality. (In this book, we briefly discuss food quality, but our mission is to focus on quantity.)

This chapter (and this book) focuses on the quantity — how to not eat — in other words, how to fast for health, fat loss, and longevity. Not eating, in fact,

is darn near one of the healthiest things you can do for yourself that you've probably never thought to do. And you've probably never thought to do it, because all conventional wisdom has led you to believe that skipping meals or not eating for a while is bad for you.

In this chapter we introduce you to fasting to help you understand what fasting is, why it's such a beneficial health practice, and why it's so darn effective for weight loss. We then help you decide whether or not fasting is right for you.

## *Getting a Better Idea of What Fasting Really Is*

The concept of fasting is quite simple. *Fasting* means you don't eat for a while. Although it may sound a bit contrarian, it is, without a doubt, a very safe and very sound health practice. In fact, it's good for your mind, body, and soul.

You may have heard that not eating is a bad idea, because it will slow your metabolism and cause you to gain weight. Well, you've heard wrong. Fasting is not only good for you, but also perhaps the healthiest thing you can ever do for yourself.

Fasting works because it's a hardship. It's short-term deprivation, to be exact. And, to that end, any diet that touts itself as superior because it isn't deprivation-based is not superior at all, but far inferior, to be sure. Any diet that says you can "eat whatever you want so long as you . . ." or "eat as much as you want so long as you . . ." is immediately a pile of fatuous nonsense and is to be straightaway ignored.

These sections examine the positive benefits of fasting, explain how fasting works, and discuss how you can fast. The other chapters in Part I provide more detail about these discussions to help if you want to change your lifestyle for the better and incorporate fasting into your diet.

### *Identifying the positive effects of fasting*

Fasting can help you feel and look better. In addition, here are a few of the positive effects fasting can have on your body. Fasting

- ✔ **Burns fat:** When fasting, the body naturally taps into stored body fat for energy, a process that is severely inhibited when eating frequently throughout the day. Studies have shown that fasting dramatically increases *lipolysis*, which is the fancy term for fat burning.
- ✔ **Boosts energy:** Fasting is slightly stimulatory, because it increases your natural adrenal response. In plain English, it means that while you’re fasting, you can expect your productivity to increase and concentration to improve.
- ✔ **Fights disease:** Fasting naturally boosts immunity and allows your body to naturally detoxify itself. While fasting, your body purges unhealthy, damaged, and polluted cells — as well as spurs the growth of new healthy cells.
- ✔ **Delays aging:** Eating has an aging effect on the body, which happens primarily through *insulin*, which is your body’s primary nutrient transport and blood-sugar regulating hormone. When you eat, your pancreas secretes insulin. And the problem with eating too much or too frequently is that insulin speeds up biological aging process. Fasting delays aging by suppressing insulin levels.
- ✔ **Enhances exercise:** Fasting and exercise potentiate each other, meaning they increase each other’s positive effects. Exercising in a fasted state can help you to burn more fat, increase vitality, and build muscle more efficiently.

The benefits of fasting are huge, whereas there really isn’t a reason why you shouldn’t fast on a regular basis. In fact, fasting is also the world’s most ancient healing mechanism. All animals, except human beings, fast instinctively when sick or wounded. Chapter 2 discusses these benefits in more detail.

## *Examining how it works*

The human body can be either in a fasted state or a fed state; it can’t be in between. Therefore, if the fed state is yang, then the fasting state is yin. Fasting provides balance — by adding in more yin to counterweigh all that yang. Fasting basically works in three ways:

- ✔ **It optimizes your hormonal makeup.** When in a fasted state, hormones that are particularly beneficial are permitted free reign, including *glucagon*, which is the yin to insulin’s yang. Glucagon, like insulin, is secreted by the pancreas in order to regulate blood sugar. But rather than shutting nutrients into cells, glucagon pulls nutrients out of cells, including fatty acids, which has earned glucagon the reputation of being something

of a fat-burning hormone. However, glucagon can only prevail in a fasted state.

- ✔ **It surges natural growth hormone.** Insulin, the hormone secreted during the fed state, heavily suppresses natural growth hormone. Meaning, the more frequently you eat, the less natural growth hormone your body produces. Natural growth hormone is the closest thing humans have to a fountain of youth. It burns fat, builds muscle, and works to keep the body biologically young and resilient.
- ✔ **It permits the body to cleanse itself.** When in a fasted state, the body disperses its natural house cleaners, which consist primarily of *microphages* (think of these as cells that attack and destroy harmful invaders) and white blood cells that pull toxins out of cells, engulf them, and dispose of them. When constantly fed, this natural detoxification process is hampered. Frequently feeding functions as a one-way escape valve, permitting toxins into the body, but not letting them back out. Not until you enter a fasted state can you flip that valve and allow toxins to pour out of the body.

Chapter 2 delves deeper into the science of fasting.

## *Understanding the best way to go about it*

You may be surprised to hear that you can go about fasting in several different ways. Some of them include longer fasting periods (up to 24 hours at a time), whereas others include short fasting periods (12 to 16 hours). Some methods include strict fasts (nothing but water) and others include controlled fasts (limited caloric intake).

In this book, we discuss four common fasting options. These options are as follows:

- ✔ **Intermittent fasting:** Intermittent fasting is when you fast for 24 to 36 hours (typically once or twice a week). This method is a simple way to introduce fasting into your life because you only need to take a break from eating for a day. This works exceptionally well to reduce overall calorie intake without having to worry about making many other changes on your nonfasting days. Check out Chapter 4 for more details.
- ✔ **5:2 Diet:** The 5:2 Diet, also known as the Fast Diet, is the gentlest introduction to fasting, because it simply requires that for two days out of the week you only eat two meals (500-calorie meals if you're a woman and 600-calorie meals if you're a man). This method is perhaps the best way for most people to get acclimated with fasting, before perusing some

of the more intensive efforts. Chapter 5 gives you the lowdown on this method.

- ✓ **Micro-fasting:** Micro-fasting is a daily fasting regimen. Think of it as the no breakfast diet. This idea flies in the face of conventional wisdom, but for good reasons (all of which we explain in Chapter 6). Micro-fasting has you fasting for 16 hours each day, compressing the time you eat into an eight-hour window. Micro-fasting is both easy to implement and enormously beneficial. Head to Chapter 6 for how to incorporate micro-fasting into your diet.
- ✓ **The Warrior Diet:** The Warrior Diet, made popular by the book of the same title, is similar to micro-fasting in the sense that it condenses the time you're allowed to eat into a small window (about four hours), but different in a few other regards. The fasting period is less strict, and more of a controlled fast, where you're encouraged to consume certain live/raw foods throughout the earlier parts of the day followed by a fairly intense overeating phase later in the day. The Warrior Diet is unconventional, effective, and satisfying. Chapter 7 explains the ins and outs of the Warrior Diet.



Understanding the best way to fast is simply a matter of preference. All fasts work, and each has its unique benefits. Our job, in this book, is to explain and to review these four popular and effective fasting protocols and then to help you select the one that best fits your lifestyle. The best fasting method for you is the one that you will stick to. The method you choose is little concern of ours. We just want you to choose one and then stick to it.

## Tapping into the roots of fasting: No carrots involved

Fasting goes back thousands and thousands of years to ancient Greece. The Greeks were fond of fasting for its ability to clarify the mind and purify the body. Hippocrates, the father of western medicine, advocated fasting as a preventive measure as well as a prescription to remedy all serious ailments.

The famous Greek historian Plutarch once wrote, "Instead of medicine, rather, fast a day."

Many other wise men of days long past recognized fasting's amazing restorative abilities.

Plato and Aristotle also encouraged fasting to enhance physical well-being and boost mental prowess.

Great men also practiced fasting from other cultures. Buddha liked fasting. And so did Jesus.

If only humankind knew now what it did back then, which is the simple notion that the body thrives under hardship. The difficulties in life don't kill, but the pleasures — drunkenness, idleness, and gluttony to name a few — do.

## *Figuring Out Why People Should Fast*

Fasting is something you should do from time to time, even if you're not trying to lose weight. The general health benefits of fasting are simply too enormous to ignore.

People who fast regularly experience the following:

- ✓ A lower risk of diseases, such as diabetes, heart disease, cancer, Alzheimer's disease, and Parkinson's disease
- ✓ Improved cognitive function
- ✓ A leaner physique

Quite plainly, fasting is, before anything else, a practice for health and longevity. And to know whether or not you should fast is merely a matter of answering the question "Do I want to live longer and healthier?" If the answer is yes, then you should fast.

Many people may want to consider fasting with the intention of losing some weight, so these sections examine why fasting is a no-brainer if you're looking to get leaner.

### *Losing weight equals calorie restriction*

In order to lose weight, you have to take in fewer calories than you use. All diets — low-fat diets, low-carb diets, whatever diet, at the end of the day — all aim to achieve the same objective — a calorie deficit — which explains why just about any diet will work for a period of time. How fasting and all the other diets differ is that fasting is perhaps the safest, healthiest, and quickest way to assume a calorie deficit.



Not all diets are healthy, as you probably know, and being healthy is a lot more than just losing weight. A good, healthy diet is a balanced diet comprised of high-quality food sources, including meat, seafood, nuts, vegetables, and fruit. A healthy diet avoids heavily processed or man-made food sources, because even though they may cause you to lose weight, they pollute your system with harmful additives and chemicals.

Chapter 8 identifies the healthful types of foods you can eat, no matter whether you're on a fast or during your off-fast times.

## Why so many Americans are obese

Realizing what causes obesity — and what keeps people from reaching their weight goals — is simple. It’s all about the complete and total *overabundance* of food. People have just too much food available and they eat too much of it.

According to several studies conducted in 2012 and 2013, you can easily see the overabundance of food that abounds in the United States today, as well as the poor effects it has on health:

- ✔ The food industry produces nearly 4,000 calories of food per person per day.
- ✔ The average American consumes more than 2,500 calories per day, which is a 20 percent increase over consumption levels in 1970.
- ✔ The average American also eats more than 30 teaspoons of sugar and sweeteners each day, which is three times the recommended amount.
- ✔ More than 73 percent of US adults are overweight or obese and already more than 20 percent of children unfortunately are as well.
- ✔ The cost of obesity-related medical expenditures in the United States runs upward of \$150 billion per year.
- ✔ Twenty percent of Americans report that they’re currently on a diet to lose weight.

Intermittent fasting can cut back on your interaction with this overabundance by simply saying “No thanks” one or two times a week.

## *Burning calories becomes easier*

Fasting is at root all about creating a calorie deficit. And fasting makes it easy. Fasting takes large chunks out of your weekly calorie intake. And it does so fairly painlessly too. For example, say right now you consume about 2,000 calories to maintain your current weight, which is 14,000 calories a week. If you implement one full 24-hour fast once a week, your weekly caloric intake is reduced to 12,000 calories.



Will reducing your weekly caloric intake by 2,000 calories cause you to lose weight? Of course! The best part is that you didn’t need to worry about counting calories or changing anything else. All you had to do was take a break from eating for a day. If you eat the Paleo Diet (see Chapter 8 for more details) on your nonfasting days, which we highly recommend, you will not only be able to reduce caloric intake further, if you choose, but you’ll also take solace knowing that you’re fueling your body with the foods you were designed to eat, the foods that promote health at a cellular level.

What makes fasting so powerful is that it does what other diets aim to do (reduce calories) quicker and with far less torment. Yes, skipping meals is still the best way to go about losing weight — always has been, always will be. There is no easier way to assume a calorie deficit than fasting.

Just remember that fasting won't make up for an otherwise terrible diet. You should use fasting in combination with a sound, healthful diet, such as the Paleo Diet, for maximum effects. For more on the Paleo Diet, please check out our other book, *Living Paleo For Dummies* (John Wiley & Sons, Inc.).

## *Determining who should and shouldn't fast*

Fasting has been known to help alleviate and reverse many chronic health conditions, such as inflammation, Type-2 diabetes, and hypertension. However, fasting may not be right for everybody right away.



Before you start any fasting protocol, consult your doctor. If you have any health issues that you think may be aggravated by fasting, be sure to discuss them with your doctor as well. And feel free to bring this book to your next visit and discuss the various fasting options with your doctor, so that he or she can also help you to decide if fasting is right for you, and if so, which fasting course is the best fit for you.

The following lists different categories of people and whether fasting may or may not be right for them:

- ✓ **Healthy adults:** All healthy adults should engage in some sort of fast from time to time. There is no reason not to, and fasting may be the very thing that keeps them healthy.
- ✓ **Children:** Most children, up to the age of 18, don't need to fast. Although most children shouldn't eat as frequently as they do, they need not engage in prolonged bouts of fasting. Children are growing and need sound nutrition to do so.

The exception to this rule is overweight children. The first step in reversing childhood obesity shouldn't be fasting, but instead restructuring their diet. Get the child eating healthily first, removing all sugar and junk food. After a child is eating healthily, you'll likely find it unnecessary to also have him or her fast. But, as always, if you're under the age of 18 or have a child who you believe might benefit from fasting, consult with your doctor first.

- ✓ **People with Type-2 Diabetes:** Fasting has been used for ages as a means to help reverse Type-2 diabetes, and the research on its effectiveness to do so is astonishing. However, if you have Type-2 diabetes, you must absolutely consult with your doctor before engaging in any sort of fasting protocol.
- ✓ **Immunosuppressed individuals:** Any individual who is immunosuppressed, such as someone with HIV/AIDS, cancer, lupus, or anything



similar, must consult with his or her doctor before engaging in any sort of fasting protocol.

- ✔ **Pregnant women:** Studies on the effects of fasting on pregnant women during Ramadan have indicated no negative effects on mother or child. But just like any other special circumstance, if you're pregnant and want to fast, you must first garner your doctor's approval.
- ✔ **High-level athletes:** High-level athletes too can benefit from fasting. Fasting helps to enhance recovery and improve nutrient-uptake efficiency, which makes the muscle-building and strength-gaining processes easier. But a high-level athlete must judiciously apply fasting. Don't fast on game days or before any other circumstance where you require a substantial amount of gas in the tank.
- ✔ **People with eating disorders:** People with eating disorders should consult with a psychotherapist. Although fasting is very healthful, it won't cure the underlying emotional disorder as related to food.
- ✔ **Vegans or vegetarians:** Fasting can be implemented with nearly any form of diet or lifestyle. It's particularly suitable for vegans and vegetarians as well.

## *Asking Yourself Whether It's Right for You*

Fasting is right for anyone seeking a longer, healthier, and more vibrant life. However, you may have a few other questions that you want answered to help you determine whether fasting is right for you. Here are some common questions and answers to help you make that important decision:

- ✔ **How well do you manage hunger?** When you fast, you'll get hungry. Unfortunately it's unavoidable. What will make you successful is your ability to manage hunger, embrace it even. If you know that you're a person who simply can't tolerate any hunger of any kind (which is an issue for you to figure out why), fasting can help you get a handle on it. Fasting teaches you how to not let hunger control you. Chapter 14 provides ten quick ways to help you battle hunger when you're fasting.
- ✔ **Are you willing to commit to at least three months?** Nothing works immediately. And frankly, if you're not willing to commit to a fasting protocol for three solid months, without deviation, then you're just not giving it a fair shot. Note that after three months, you don't just stop. Fasting is a lifestyle — a permanent change. Three months is simply the

test-drive period to fairly assess whether or not fasting is right for you. We hope you incorporate it into your diet for the rest of your life.

- ✔ **Can you focus and get into the right mindset?** Fasting requires a certain degree of mental toughness and fortitude. Fasting, like exercise, is a stressor. And mild stressors, such as fasting and exercise, are required to maintain optimum health, so don't enter fasting expecting it to be a pleasure cruise. Nothing worthwhile is ever a pleasure cruise, except for, of course, an actual pleasure cruise, but even most of those are over-rated. For you to be successful, you must first expect to be challenged. If being challenged doesn't sound like something you want, then fasting probably isn't right for you.
- ✔ **How is your diet otherwise?** Fasting won't save you from an otherwise unhealthy diet. Before you begin a fasting protocol, make sure you get your diet in order. To get the most from fasting, you need to eat healthily when not fasting. We recommend the Paleo Diet, which is a diet based on how your ancestors used to eat, comprised mostly of meats, seafood, nuts, vegetables, and fruit, while omitting sugar, flour, and grains. Check out Chapter 8 for more details about the Paleo Diet.
- ✔ **What do you think of exercise?** To get the most out of fasting, you need to incorporate some form of exercise into your life. Indeed you can fast without exercising, but you'll be missing out on the full spectrum of physical and mental benefits if you do. Fasting and exercise actually work to boost the benefits of each other. We provide you with sample exercise routines in this book (check out Chapter 12) to help get you started combining fasting and exercise. For a more complete guide on how to properly exercise for maximum impact, please check out our book *Paleo Workouts For Dummies* (John Wiley & Sons, Inc.).
- ✔ **How is your lifestyle otherwise?** Fasting can do some amazing things. It can heal conditions, boost immunity, burn fat, and increase productivity. But fasting is best served in conjunction with other healthy habits. Before beginning a fasting protocol, we recommend that you also introduce other healthy habits into lifestyle as well, such as physical exercise, because fasting works to boost all the positive effects of exercise. Refer to the chapters in Part 4 for more on exercise and other healthy lifestyle habits that are important.
- ✔ **Do you have a support system?** When starting something such as a new diet or exercise program, people tend to adhere for longer and more strictly when they begin with a friend, family member, or colleague. Before embarking on your fasting journey, seek out someone who might wish to join you, so that you can hold each other accountable. This is an effective way to ensure progress. To get the most out of your support system, force each other to keep a food journal, detailing your fasting periods and everything else you eat throughout the week. Chapter 3 discusses how to rely on your support system.



What gets measured gets managed. Keeping a food journal forces you to think twice before you put something into your mouth. It often helps deter you from making poor food choices, even if you don't have a support system to share the food journal. If keeping a full food log of everything you eat throughout the week sounds like too much, then snap a picture of it on your phone before you eat it. Doing so can make you think twice before putting junk food into your mouth.



If you decide to fast, check out [www.dummies.com/extras/fastdiets](http://www.dummies.com/extras/fastdiets) for a bonus Part of Tens list for some tricks to help you get the most from your fast.

## How I started fasting: Pat Flynn

I'm a minimalist. In almost all circumstances, I believe that less equals more, which has been my philosophy on exercise for a number of years now and what makes me a little bit different. And because I am a man who is incessantly seeking efficiency, I always strive to do the least amount I need to do to get the job done, and not a smidgen more.

In other words, I believe any exercise program will improve in direct ratio to the number of things kept out of it that needn't be there. I now say the exact same thing about nutrition. Basically any nutrition program will improve in direct ratio to the number of things kept out of it that needn't be there, which means, of course, to omit any needless meals, foods, and supplements.

I was introduced to fasting five years ago, when a colleague of mine handed me a book about the Warrior Diet. He challenged me to stick to it for three months, despite my skepticism. I did and my results were spectacular. My daily energy levels soared while my body fat levels plummeted. I felt enervated, more alive than ever before, as if a deep fog had been lifted that I never even knew existed until it was gone.

I spent the next four years researching and experimenting the miracle of fasting. And I couldn't believe how wrong everything I ever thought I knew about nutrition up to that point had been. The research on fasting is clear and astounding. The benefits are enormous. Yet people are lead to believe, through various media manipulators (namely large food corporations) that not eating is somewhat deleterious. This, of course, is ridiculous. It's just not true.

Fasting changed my life, and I am deeply appreciative that I got such an early start on it. I now keep 7 to 8 percent body fat year-round, and very rarely do I ever eat before noon. I'm healthier than ever before (and yes, I have the blood work to prove it), more productive, and an all-around happier person. All because of fasting.

My chief aim now is to share with you the power of fasting — to help you implement fasting into your life, so that you can start to make the progress that you deserve to make. I am here to help you along the way. If you ever need anything, please shoot me an email. You can reach me any time at [PatFlynn@ChroniclesOfStrength.com](mailto:PatFlynn@ChroniclesOfStrength.com).

## My story with fasting: Dr. Kellyann

I've always loved a good mystery — the challenge of figuring something out based on my observations. Growing up, I was the roving reporter. You could find me casing the neighborhood, pen and paper in hand and always ready to crack the case.

As I entered my career, my ever-present curiosity evolved from a “whodunit” to more of a “whatdunit” — specifically, what causes people’s health to fail and what causes the body to look and feel its best. It’s no wonder I became a health practitioner, and, to that end, it’s no wonder I discovered fasting.

I learned early on in the clinic that I was really, for all intents and purposes, in the solutions business. People came to me wanting answers, and I often found them. That’s how I became attracted to fasting. So many of my patients faced time crunches and roadblocks on their paths to health. I realized if I could find a diet tool that would add simplicity and not steal time, patients just might get some good results.

Channeling the detective Nancy Drew, I searched maniacally for a system that would meet those goals. What I found seemed like an

oversimplification. Rather profound, really. Eat healthy, real foods, with an intentional short-term “pattern-interrupt,” where you give your body a break from eating.

I realized a positive outcome could happen from what you *don’t* do, rather than what you *do* do. As I myself adopted the fasting principles, I was blown away. It provided my life with flexibility and ease. I lost body fat, increased muscle mass, decreased my insulin levels, and increased growth hormones. Bottom line: I looked younger, stronger, and leaner, and I felt fantastic — without much hassle.

I knew whatever was happening was happening on a cellular level — that my body was going through some kind of “internal housekeeping.” This was a strategy worth sharing.

I have since communicated the message of fasting to the masses. I believe eating healthy, real foods with an intentional short-term “pattern-interrupt” can be the solution for so many who want to look and feel their best.

For fasting news, tips, and inspiration, visit my website, [www.drkellyann.com](http://www.drkellyann.com), or follow me on twitter @drkellyann.