

Q.

What are the health benefits of intermittent fasting?

A.

There's more than one way to practice intermittent fasting, and it does offer a variety of health benefits.



ASK THE *Wellness* DOCTOR

Fortunately, research shows intermittent fasting can help reduce inflammation in your body, lowering your risk for disease.

7. Protect against certain types of cancer

Research shows that intermittent fasting may help protect against certain types of cancer and support chemotherapy treatments. How? Fasting may slow down the growth of tumors and reduce the bad effects of cancer treatments.

Thinking about giving intermittent fasting a try?

It's not for everyone. If you're pregnant, nursing a baby, you're underweight, or have other health problems, talk to your doctor before trying intermittent fasting.

Intermittent fasting isn't just a diet trend. It's a way of living that comes with many health benefits. It can help with weight loss, make your body work better, keep your heart and brain healthy, and maybe even help you live longer.

What does intermittent fasting look like?

Here's the simple answer. It's a way of eating that involves taking breaks from eating during a specific window of time. Think of it like a schedule to follow for when to eat and when to take a break from food.

Here's an example:

- The most common approach to intermittent fasting is the 16/8 method.¹
- You fast for 16 hours, and eat during an 8-hour period.
- That might look like lunch, dinner and some snacks.

7 health benefits of intermittent fasting

Can skipping meals and following an eating schedule really help you lose weight and improve your health? Check out these seven health benefits of intermittent fasting:²

1. Boost weight loss and metabolism

When you fast, you eat fewer calories. It's a simple formula that can help you lose weight. It also helps speed up your metabolism by making your body use stored fat for energy.

2. Control blood sugar levels

If you're at risk for diabetes, intermittent fasting can help. It makes your body better at controlling blood sugar. This can lead to less insulin resistance and lower levels of insulin in your body, which is important for managing diabetes.

3. Improve heart health

Fasting can also improve heart health. How? It can lower your blood pressure, improve cholesterol levels, and reduce inflammation in your body.

4. Keep your brain healthy

Intermittent fasting doesn't just help your body, it helps your brain, too. It can increase a type of protein that supports brain function. This can make you think better, improve memory, and even protect your brain from dementia and age-related memory loss.

5. Improve healthy-cell growth

When you fast, your body starts cleaning up its cells. This is important for your overall health, and can help you live longer. Intermittent fasting helps get rid of bad or damaged cells that can make you sick.

6. Reduce inflammation

Inflammation is linked to a long list of chronic diseases like obesity, heart disease, and certain types of cancer.

References

1. Varady, K., et al. (2021). Cardiometabolic benefits of intermittent fasting. *Annual Review of Nutrition*, 41:333-361. From: <https://www.annualreviews.org/doi/10.1146/annurev-nutr-052020-041327>
2. Cleveland Clinic. (2022). Intermittent fasting: how it works and 4 types explained. From: <https://health.clevelandclinic.org/intermittent-fasting-4-different-types-explained/>