

With summer just around the corner, many people have one thing weighing heavily on their minds-How can I look good in my swimsuit? One of the most popular, effective weight loss methods available right now is intermittent fasting. Intermittent fasting is just what it sounds like--fasting (refraining from eating food) intermittently (at regular intervals). With our lifestyles becoming busier, the average person doesn't have time to follow a specific meal plan or spend several hours during the week doing meal prep. The intermittent fasting meal plan allows you to choose your own schedule and tailor your diet to your needs. This type of meal plan is tried and true and will often yield big results. Many celebrities swear by this method, including Hugh Jackman, who had a certain image to obtain for his role in The Wolverine.

### **How can I do an intermittent fasting meal plan?**

There are several ways to do an intermittent fast, but for the beginner, there are some tried and true methods.

#### **The 16/8**

Fast for 16 hours each day

Eat in an 8-hour window

For example: eat dinner like normal, skip breakfast, have your first meal at lunch

#### **Fast during the day, eat a huge meal at night**

Eat small portions of fruits and vegetables during the day

Eat one large meal for dinner

#### **Skip meals intermittently**

One of the most natural ways to implement an intermittent fast, as many busy people do this subconsciously

Simply skip meals spontaneously when you are not exceptionally hungry or are too busy to stop and eat

#### **The 5:2 diet**

Eat normally five days during the week

Restrict caloric intake to 500-600 calories two days of the week

### **Eat-Stop-Eat**

Fast for 24 hours, once or twice a week

Eat normally on the days you are not fasting

Drink water, coffee, tea, or other non-caloric beverages during the fast, but no solid food for 24 hours

### **Alternate-Day Fasting**

Similar to Eat-Stop-Eat, but you are fasting every other day instead of one or two sporadic days during the week

There are several versions of this method, some of which allow roughly 500 calories on fasting days

Likely not sustainable for long periods of time

### **What do I eat on an intermittent fasting meal plan?**

Although the point of an intermittent fasting meal plan is exactly that--to fast, it is important to eat healthy during those times you are breaking your fast. Healthy foods are typically anything that can be found in nature (not processed). Here are some examples of recommended foods:

Oatmeal

Lean steak

Grilled chicken

String beans

Sweet potatoes

Apples

### **What do I drink on an intermittent fasting meal plan?**

The good news is that you can drink anything that does not have calories, such as water, tea, diet soda, or coffee. Although you can not add milk or cream, you can use sweetener. Since caffeine is a natural appetite suppressant, many people new to the intermittent fast find that coffee or tea helps curb their cravings, especially in the beginning stages of the fast. One warning issued to intermittent fasters, however, is to avoid drinking sweet drinks (such as diet soda). By indulging in sweet drinks or adding too much sweetener, your body will crave sweets and unhealthy foods later since you have “saved” your calories by only drinking instead of eating.

### **What are the benefits of an intermittent fasting meal plan?**

The intermittent fasting meal plan is increasing in popularity because it's relatively easy and requires less prep than some diets that require you to eat every few hours. Working parents, students, and busy professionals often do not have the time to spend during the week doing meal prep and pre-packing foods to take along with them for lunch or dinner. If you do not like cooking or have a busy schedule, the intermittent fast can be very beneficial. Additionally, there are many varieties to the fast and you can choose whatever method works best for you.

### **Are there health benefits to an intermittent fasting meal plan?**

Losing weight is great for your image, but weight loss is also beneficial to cardiovascular health, as well as your muscle and joint health. But there are other health benefits to the intermittent fasting meal plan as well. Studies have shown that intermittent fasting meal plans can improve metabolism health and increase energy. Intermittent fasting helps to keep your blood sugar stable and also gives your digestion system a break, allowing it time to repair cells, removing toxic material. The toxic material in cells is what causes inflammation, so by getting rid of this material your body is able to repair itself. Additionally, the intermittent fasting meal plan can also boost your body's immune system.

### **Why does intermittent fasting work?**

Intermittent fasting has gotten much attention recently, due in part to the fact that many people have seen big results on this plan. But what makes this diet any different than other diet plans you may have tried in the past? For one, intermittent fasting does not require you to eat any special foods, or cut out any special group of food, such as carbohydrates. In fact, it is recommended that you do not eat low-carb on non-fasting days in order to preserve your energy. By eating healthy foods on non-fast days and simply fasting for 24 hours, you are reducing your caloric intake by at least ten percent per week. While your body is fasting, it is using stored fat for energy, hence burning off the fat to help you lose weight.

### **Still skeptical?**

Many celebrities such as Ben Affleck, Beyoncé, and Christian Bale swear by intermittent fasting meal plans. This type of diet allows them to shed weight quickly for roles and is also beneficial to their busy lifestyle. Celebrities who have tested the intermittent fasting meal plans also claim that the diet has proven to fight the effects of aging as well.

**Is intermittent fasting right for me?**

The intermittent fasting meal plan is beneficial to many people because there are so many ways to implement the fast. By choosing certain days of the week or even certain hours of the day to fast, you can alter the diet to fit your lifestyle. There are no special foods to buy and no food groups to eliminate, so you can be as creative as you want with your food consumption. With the additional health benefits that come along with an intermittent fast, your body will thank you by giving you an elongated, healthy life.