

10 Important Evidence-Based Health Benefits of Intermittent Fasting

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You may be curious about intermittent fasting and what it is. Intermittent fasting is an eating pattern where you switch off between fasting and eating. A variety of studies have shown the benefits of intermittent fasting and what it does to the body and brain. What to know more? Here are the health benefits of intermittent fasting – evidence-based, of course.

1. It changes the way cells, genes, and hormones function

There are several things that occur in your body when you're fasting. Many of these changes which occur are most likely changes you weren't aware of until now. Though, these are some of the changes which happen while fasting:

Insulin levels: while fasting, the levels of insulin in your blood drop significantly which aids in fat burning.

Gene expression: during the fasting period, genes and molecules change in relation to longevity and protection against diseases.

HGH: Human Growth Hormone levels are greatly affected by fasting. They are able to increase as much as 5-fold. The higher the levels of HGH in the body, the easier it is to gain muscle and burn body fat.

Cell repair: during the fasting period, the body is able to initiate cell repair. For example, it removes waste materials from the cells.

2. It can help you lose weight and stomach fat

Those who try intermittent fasting are doing it to lose weight and remove stomach fat. Overall, intermittent fasting means that you can only eat at certain times during the day. In addition, as shown in point one, intermittent fasting activates hormones that aid in weight loss.

Reduced insulin levels, increased HGH, and norepinephrine all aid in breaking down fat molecules, transferring the fat into an energy source. Thus, short-term fasting actually increases your metabolic rate by up to 14%. Increasing your metabolic rate and reducing your caloric intake, is a simple equation for healthy and effective weight loss.

3. Reduces Insulin resistance

Diabetes, specifically type 2, is incredibly common in today's society. This is caused by high blood sugar levels. However, intermittent fasting can help reduce insulin resistance which will lower blood sugar levels, reducing your risk of type 2 diabetes.

Intermittent fasting has been well documented with regards to diabetes and has been shown to provide amazing health benefits for insulin resistance and reduced blood sugar levels. In one study intermittent fasting proved to reduce blood sugar levels by 3-6% and reduce insulin levels by 20-31%. This shows that intermittent fasting can be highly effective for individuals who are at risk of type 2 diabetes. Though these results may differ whether you're female or male, though, the results typically favored men.

4. Reduces Oxidative Stress and Inflammation

Huge issues are stress and inflammation within the body. These two factors have long been attributed to an increase in age and chronic diseases. Oxidative stress occurs when free radicals, which are unstable molecules, react with essential molecules such as protein and DNA. What happens is that this interaction causes damage to proteins and DNA.

Though, intermittent fasting has been shown to build resistance to oxidative stress and reduce inflammation within the body as well. As we all know, inflammation triggers many common diseases which can be easily prevented.

5. Helps the heart

Without the heart, we're nothing. Heart diseases are one of the biggest killers in today's society. There are a variety of risk factors that can increase the risk of being diagnosed with heart disease. However, intermittent fasting has continued to show evidence of improving various risk factors associated with heart diseases such as high blood pressure, inflammation, high blood sugar levels, and high cholesterol.

6. Promotes Cellular repair

During the fasting process, the body encourages the cells to remove waste. This act is called autophagy. During this period, the cells are breaking down and metabolizing the ineffective proteins which develop in the cell over time. By increasing autophagy, the cells are better protected to fight against diseases such as cancer and Alzheimer's disease.

7. It may prevent cancer

Though the term cancer is very broad and covers a range of different types of cancer, it can be easily described as the uncontrolled growth of cells.

It's been shown that fasting has many benefits on the metabolism which may be able to reduce the risk of cancer and its spreading. We're still waiting for more human studies since, at this moment, animal studies are our only source of evidence. Still, in those studies, it is shown that intermittent fasting can help prevent cancer.

Though, there has been evidence of human cancer patients who have had reduced chemotherapy symptoms during the fasting period.

8. It improves brain function

Intermittent fasting is also very helpful for your brain. It's been shown that through fasting, the metabolic support provided positively affects the brain. By reducing oxidative stress, inflammation, insulin resistance, and blood sugar levels, the brain is able to function optimally. In rat studies, intermittent fasting increased the growth of new nerve cells which promotes brain function.

In addition, it also increases the levels of the brain hormone brain-derived neurotrophic factor (BDNF), low levels of this hormone have been linked to depression and other brain problems.

9. It prevents Alzheimer's Disease

Alzheimer's disease is one of the most common neurodegenerative diseases in the world. Though there is no cure for the disease, prevention is the only option.

One rat study has shown that intermittent fasting aids in delaying Alzheimer's disease and also reduces its severity.

With human research, it's been shown that short-term fasting was able to improve Alzheimer's symptoms in 9 out of 10 patients. Though more human research is needed, it's clear that there may be a link between the two.

10. Intermittent fasting can extend your life

Everyone wants to live longer, right? Well, intermittent fasting may be the ticket to add longevity to life. Through various rat studies, it showed that intermittent fasting can extend lifespan similarly to calorie restriction. Some of the studies showed dramatic effects with one rat which fasted every other day, living 83% longer than the other.

It has yet to be tested on humans, however, is increasing in popularity among the anti-aging population.