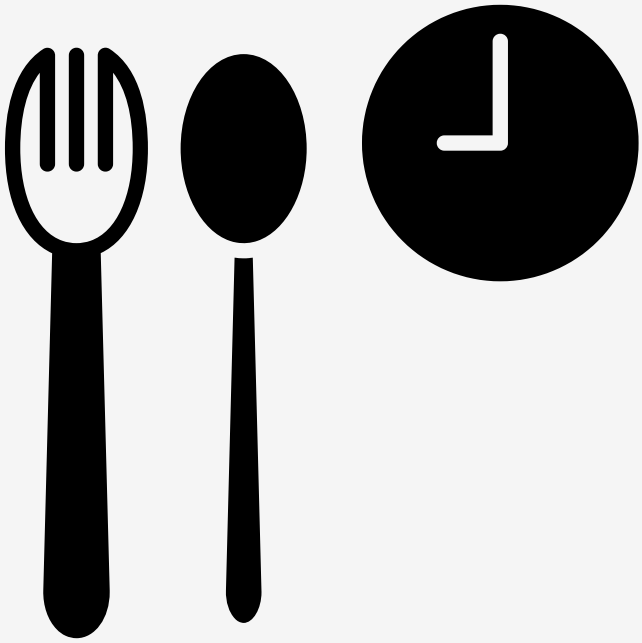
INTERMITTENT FASTING (IF) GUIDE



By Ashley Hawksworth

IMPORTANT DISCLAIMER

Please Read!

This guide is designed for those individuals focusing on fitness and nutrition, who **ALREADY** possess a firm grasp of fundamental nutritional principles and its practical input into their daily life.

Intermittent Fasting, abbreviated as IF, presents a complex notion for the typical individual, which is why we advise newcomers to approach it with care.

In cases of specific medical conditions, eating disorders, or metabolic syndromes, it is **ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL** to consult a medical professional before embarking on any new dietary regimen.

Having a positive relationship with food should take precedence before going to any dietary practice.

I **HIGHLY** recommend a thorough understanding of the foundational concepts before delving deeper.

INTRODUCTION

I'd say that most people do not like hunger and think of hunger as a negative that needs to be controlled or taken care of straight away.
After all, hunger is your body's way of telling you that you need to eat now, right?

Also, may gym goers or even trainers really believe that the idea of eating infrequently will slow your metabolism and you won't be able to keep or build muscle.
Saying that you need to eat frequently, perhaps consume 6-7 small meals a day to keep the muscles fed.

We'll talk about all of that later.

But first, let's talk about Intermittent Fasting



WHAT IS INTERMITTENT FASTING (IF)?

Scientifically, "intermittent fasting" usually refers to diets with 2-4 days of caloric restriction, while "time-restricted eating" is for daily fasting.
However, in this guide, both terms will be used interchangeably.

Time-restricted eating is the practice of abstaining from food for a certain number of hours each day, allowing for only a specific window of time for eating.
This can range from 18 to 23 hours without food, followed by a period of unrestricted eating.
One variation, known as OMAD (One Meal a Day), involves consuming all food in a single meal lasting less than an hour.

Intermittent fasting typically refers to eating schedules involving more than 24 hours of reduced energy intake.
Time-restricted eating, such as the 18:6, 20:4, and OMAD protocols, involves not eating for 18 to 23 hours, followed by unrestricted eating for the remaining time.

IF has gained popularity due to verified health benefits. Fasting is an age-old practice rooted in religious, social, and ethical reasons. In the past, intermittent fasting was a natural consequence of limited food availability. However, in modern times, excessive and mindless food consumption contributes to dietary and health issues.



THE BENEFITS OF IF

16:8

Following a 16:8 time-restricted eating protocol seems to be a viable tool for reducing body weight and body fat, with and without caloric restriction. Some studies have found that 16:8 can preferentially reduce fat mass while sparing muscle, but further research is still required to confirm this. At worst, this limited evidence suggests this protocol can be about as effective as standard dieting, and potentially psychologically easier for some people.

16:8 time-restricted eating can be psychologically easier than other types of dietary restriction.
It may have some unique metabolic benefits, but those findings aren’t as clear just yet.

20:4 & OMAD

Limited studies on intermittent fasting with contentious findings. Can be effective for weight loss with calorie deficit. Some protocols may be challenging. More research needed on muscle loss. Benefits come from energy-scarce state. Longer fasts may have positive effects on blood pressure and glycemic control. Can be easier to follow than standard diets and may have cardiometabolic benefits.

EVERYONE IS INDIVIDUAL

You will only know if IF will benefit you by testing it on yourself!
Please read the Important Disclaimer before doing so.

THE SIDE EFFECTS OF IF

16:8

Extended periods without food may be challenging and lead to symptoms such as nausea, dizziness and - quite obviously - hunger.
Safety studies are limited, but one small trial reported no negative impacts on body image, uncontrolled eating, or eating disorders.
However, **fasting is not recommended for individuals with type 1 diabetes, pregnancy, or pre-existing eating disorders.**
It is advisable for people with these conditions to consult a knowledgeable physician. Although no significant side effects have been reported, caution may be necessary for individuals with medical conditions.

20:4 & OMAD

Limited research on safety, but adverse effects are generally mild (hunger, headaches, dizziness, upset stomach).
Follow-up and long-term adherence challenging, leading to high dropout rates. Effects on muscle growth unclear.
Contraindicated for some conditions like type 1 diabetes, pregnancy and eating disorders; consult physician if unsure.
No serious side effects reported, but caution advised for those with medical conditions.



HOW TO FOLLOW IF

16:8

Intermittent fasting involves a 16-hour fasting window, during which only water, tea, or coffee is permitted.
Eating can be done during the remaining 8-hour window.
The timing of the eating window can be adjusted based on individual preferences and insulin sensitivity.
Certain products with more than 5-10 kcal should be avoided during the fasting window.

20:4 & OMAD

To practice fasting, choose a daily window of 18 to 23 hours where you abstain from calories completely.
It can start in the evening or earlier in the day.
Studies suggest that an early eating window may be better for insulin sensitivity.
Water, tea, seltzer and coffee are allowed during the fasting window, while other products with more than 5-10 kcal should be avoided.
Familiar support and time make adherence easier.



DO NOT CYCLE THROUGH RESTRICTING AND OVEREATING

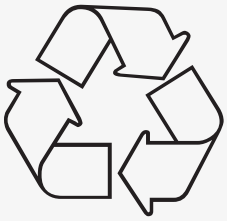
BINGE AND RESTRICT CYCLE

While one small study showed that there was no negative impact on uncontrolled eating with IF, you don't want to get sucked in to the binge and restrict cycle that many people fall victim of.

The binge and restrict cycle is a damaging pattern of behaviour, it involves alternating phases of extreme restriction, where certain foods or entire food groups are strictly avoided, followed by episodes of uncontrollable overeating.

The binge-restrict cycle is quite common in individuals who are drawn to the latest diet trends as a means of shedding weight quickly. Often driven by the desire for rapid results, these individuals may engage in extreme dietary restrictions, severely limiting their calorie intake or eliminating entire food groups.

However, the pursuit of short-term goals often overshadows considerations for long-term health and sustainability.



WHAT REALLY HAPPENS WHEN YOU DON'T EAT

First 0-6 Hours

- After eating, our bodies start to break down glycogen through glycolysis. This process produces glucose.
- Thirty minutes later, blood glucose levels rise. We use glucose as our primary fuel source and brain cells can only get energy from glucose.
- Glucose is packed into the liver and muscles and the body stores fatty acids throughout the body for future use.
- Most of the stored energy goes into fuel muscle tissues and red blood cells while about 25% goes to the brain.
- This glucose-burning period lasts for up to six hours - then the 'hangry' feelings start to take over.

Next 6-72 Hours

- Nutritional ketosis, a metabolic state has been reached. This response may be entirely different in some individuals. Ketosis, in simpler terms, is using fat for energy. Reaching nutritional ketosis may take anywhere from 2-7 days, depending on body type, activity levels and what you're eating.
- Ketone bodies become a more important fuel source.

After 72 hours

- All the cells in your body will start to break down protein that releases amino acids into the blood-stream.

CONTINUED

TAKEAWAYS

- If you have missed a couple of meals or have fasted for up to 72 hours you are NOT starving or wasting away.
- After you burn your glycogen stores your body will burn fat.
- *It takes approximately 72 hours before your body starts breaking down muscle*.
- Protein is **NOT** a preferred energy source and your muscle is a source and your muscle is a source of last resort.

CONCLUSION

Short periods of fasting or calorie restriction will **NOT** result in muscle loss or slow your metabolism.
Most IF protocols recommend fasted periods of 24 hours or less which is safely below the 72 hour threshold.