

10 Tips for Healthy Fasting

Many people think about fasting in January for a variety of reasons. Perhaps you need to renew your body and soul. Did you gain weight during the holiday season? Maybe you're feeling sluggish or toxic and need to cleanse your body in short order. Or maybe you want to fast for spiritual reasons, such as a breakthrough in your personal life or for revival in this land.

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Whatever your reasons for fasting, here are 10 tips to ensure you fast smart.

1) Prepare Your Mind

Before you begin, think about why you want to fast. What do you want to achieve? It's important to have the right mindset before you start or you may lose heart early on. Pray for discipline and a strong will to complete the fast.

2) Stock Up

Shop for everything you'll need before the day you begin. Not having everything you need on your first day is a sure way to fail. If you're doing a juice fast, for example, look at the recipes you'll be using, and make sure your shopping list has all the ingredients.

3) Drink Water

Drink at least eight 8-ounce glasses of purified water while you are fasting so you can flush away toxins and waste. This will also help you stay energized. Dehydration can cause you

to feel tired and hungry.

4) Go Easy

Gentle exercise, such as walking, is good, but don't overexert yourself. Your body is working hard to eliminate toxins, remove damaged cells and restore vitality. This important work is often not completed when we eat regular meals. That's because the body focuses its attention on digestion throughout the day. Fasting frees your body from this daily chore so it can work on cleansing, repairing and healing. It's like taking a week's vacation to thoroughly clean your home.

While all this important work is going on inside, you want to give your body the rest it needs:

Take more breaks.

Avoid exhausting work. Go for walks.

Get fresh air and sun.

Go to bed early, as powerful healing hormones are released while you sleep.

Relax before bed by taking a bath, reading a good book or listening to beautiful music.

5) Choose a Plan

Many people think fasting means a strict water fast. Some people even try to follow the model of some biblical heroes—no food or water, which can be dangerous. But there is more than one type of fast. Choose the one that is best for you.

Water fast. A strict water fast for more than two or three days is not recommended unless you can completely rest and are medically supervised.

Juice fast. Freshly made juice is rich in antioxidants that bind toxins so they don't damage cells—and those antioxidants

are critical, especially during a fast.

Unlike in biblical times, where the air, soil and water were virtually pure, we have thousands of different chemicals pouring into our atmosphere every year. Most of our food is sprayed with pesticides and packaged with preservatives, additives, dyes and fillers. (Therefore, you ought to choose organic produce.) Our water is treated with chemicals, and our air is assaulted with industrial pollution.

Toxins are stored mainly in our fat cells. When we fast, those toxins are released in greater amounts. Without antioxidants to bind up free radicals, our cells can be damaged.

On the juice fast, you can drink vegetable juices, purified water, coconut water, veggie broth and herbal teas throughout the day. I emphasize vegetable juice because fruit juice has too much sugar, which can cause spikes and dips in blood sugar, leaving you tired. However, you can use a little fruit to flavor and sweeten veggie juice recipes.

All this will keep you healthy, energized and hydrated. To keep from boredom, try new juice and green smoothie recipes, such as those in my book *The Juice Lady's Big Book of Juices and Green Smoothies*.

Daniel fast. As described in Daniel 10:3, the prophet abstained for three weeks from delicacies, meat and wine, which would include all animal products and alcohol. This is a vegan diet, in other words, and includes abstaining from rich foods and desserts.

One meal a day. Everyone can fast for one meal or from certain foods. You can deny yourself coffee, sweets, soda pop, fast food, snack foods and junk food. None of these things are good for your body anyway. And if you can't do a strict fast because of your age or health, choose instead to give up some of your favorite foods. You could also fast one meal a day and drink a veggie juice instead.

6) Be Wise

You may have a physical condition that would make water or juice fasting unwise or dangerous. Seek medical advice first. However, be aware that many doctors have little knowledge of fasting or training in nutrition. People who should not do a strict water or juice fast include women who are pregnant or nursing, people who are anorexic or bulimic, anyone who is emaciated or underweight, and those who are on dialysis.

Be aware of medications and their effects while you fast. For example, a vegetable juice fast can lower your blood pressure quickly, so you would need to cut back on medication, for which you should seek your physician's advice. People with diabetes or hypoglycemia can modify a vegetable juice fast and include green smoothies made with avocado for extra protein and fat. This would also be my recommendation for anyone who is elderly or weak.

During your fast, if you become so hungry you could eat the plaster off your wall, you may have parasites or yeast overgrowth. It could be that freeloaders in your body are screaming for food. You may need to do a parasite cleanse or a yeast-control diet to get this infection under control before continuing any other kind of fast.

Please note: Children under the age of 15 should not do a strict water or juice fast.

7) Determine the Length

You can fast from one day to an extended period of time, like Jesus did for 40 days. Most people can easily handle a three-day fast. If you work, start on Friday. Then you'll have the weekend to complete the fast at home.

8) Know the Symptoms

As your body releases toxins, you might get some detox

reactions, such as headaches, tiredness, foggy brain or bad breath. (Chew parsley for your breath.) This can be part of your body ridding itself of toxins that could cause disease, which is a good thing. Don't quit your fast when this happens. The symptoms should pass rather quickly.

9) Pray

Fasting and prayer are linked throughout the Bible. Whenever we fast, we are admonished to pray, which facilitates our spiritual growth and renewal.

10) Break Smart

How you break a fast is as important as the fast itself. Break your fast the first day with only vegetable juices, green smoothies, raw fruits and vegetables, veggie soups, dehydrated vegan foods or steamed vegetables. Never break a fast with a heavy meal like a burger and fries or steak and potatoes, as you can harm your body and end up with stomach cramps and digestive issues.

Bonus: Know the Benefits

The ancient discipline of fasting offers health benefits no other therapy can provide. On the physical side, it rapidly rids the body of waste and toxins—like changing old water in an aquarium. It can eliminate edema and lower blood pressure. A study published by the *Journal of Alternative Complementary Medicine* in 2002 found that 90 percent of 174 patients with high blood pressure who incorporated fasting achieved normal blood pressure. Each of the participants who had been on antihypertensive medications were able to get off their drugs.

Fasting also helps rebalance your body's pH level. The typical American diet is mostly acid forming. A slightly acidic body contributes to weight gain, cancer and a host of other diseases. Fasting facilitates weight loss—water weight first,

then fat. This ancient practice appears to reset the metabolism, much like a computer reboot.

A fast also gives your digestive tract a rest. This helps your digestive system heal, which can lead to significant health improvements. Allergy symptoms often improve with fasting. Autoimmune disorders may heal. Fasting improves insulin sensitivity by lowering blood sugar, which helps diabetes and metabolic syndrome.

In addition, fasting is part of our spiritual heritage. It was an expected discipline in both the Old and New Testament. The Orthodox Church still has four main fast periods during the calendar year.

However, fasting is one of the most neglected spiritual disciplines of the 21st century. It is rarely discussed in most nonliturgical churches or on Christian TV. Yet Scripture admonishes us to fast and pray.

According to Scripture, when God's people fast with the right motive, seeking Him with a broken, repentant and contrite spirit, God hears from heaven (2 Chron. 7:14). He promised He will heal our lives, our churches, our communities and our nation.

Our land is in desperate need of healing. Repentance, fasting and prayer are the only hope for our nation. Fasting and prayer can bring revival and a change of direction in our country. It can also rekindle our love for Christ. Fasting is a powerful spiritual tool to make a difference in our lives.

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