

Fasting for Good Health

by Dr. Donald Colbert, M.D.

Q. I would like to do some fasting, primarily for health reasons. Is there a particular method that you recommend?

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A. Fasting, in general, is controversial. Some popular fasting techniques are good; others can be downright dangerous. I'm convinced, however, of one method of fasting that will start you on a path to healthier living.

Many believe the only true form of fasting is the total fast—not eating or drinking anything—but I consider this method unsafe. Your body must always have at least two quarts of water a day to sustain your life.

The kind of fasting most of us think of is liquid-only: avoiding all solid foods and consuming liquids for a selected period of time. The strictest, most severe of these is a water-only fast. I don't usually recommend this type either, except for people with certain autoimmune diseases or severe coronary-artery disease.

If you are considering a water-only fast, be prepared to devote several days to doing little more than fasting. For most people this method so weakens the body that it's hardly possible to work a full-time job or stay alert through a full day of school while fasting.

If you don't have the diseases I just mentioned, the best fasting method for cleansing and detoxification is juice fasting. This type of fast may take more time to achieve the same benefits of a water-only fast, but it spares you from the unpleasant weakness and hunger.

It also is much less strenuous since it results in

detoxification, alkalinizes the body and supports the liver. Not only will you probably avoid the weakness or hunger, but you also may experience tremendous energy during the fast.

Doing it occasionally—every one, three or six months—gives your gastrointestinal system a much-needed rest. I believe it is far healthier to go on a series of short juice fasts than on one long fast. This allows your body time to recuperate and rebuild.

Prepared correctly, juice can provide the nutrients, amino acids and fuel that your liver requires to detoxify. For this type, you will need lots of fresh fruits and vegetables and a juicer.

Many fasting programs are so physically challenging that you can be left feeling completely wiped out with little or no energy to function. A properly balanced juice-fasting program is designed to keep you energized enough to work, play and enjoy your daily activities.