

Study Reveals New Health Benefit of Fasting

People with chronically high blood sugar can avoid becoming diabetic by periodically fasting to bring down glucose levels, according to new research presented at a meeting of the American Diabetes Association Scientific Sessions in San Francisco this week.

Researchers at the Intermountain Heart Institute at Intermountain Medical Center in Murray, Utah, found that individuals classified as pre-diabetic—because the amount of sugar in their blood is higher than normal but is not high enough for them to be considered diabetic—can stave off the metabolic disorder by occasionally going on a one-day water-only fast.

Lead researcher Benjamin Horne, director of cardiovascular and genetic epidemiology at institute, told *Medical News Today* that past studies have suggested fasting can produce significant health benefits for individuals at risk of developing diabetes and heart disease. The latest study confirms those findings, he said.

“Together with our prior studies that showed decades of routine fasting was associated with a lower risk of diabetes and coronary artery disease, this led us to think that fasting is most impactful for reducing the risk of diabetes and related metabolic problems,” he said.

The study participants were between the ages of 30 and 69, and had at least three metabolic risk factors, such as a large waistline, high triglyceride levels, low HDL “good” cholesterol, high blood pressure, and high fasting blood sugar.

After 10-12 hours of fasting, the body begins to scavenge

other sources of energy throughout the body in order to sustain itself, the researchers explained. They suspect that in pre-diabetics the body feeds on LDL “bad” cholesterol in fat cells and negates the effect of insulin resistance—a key factor in diabetes.

The researchers also found that while fasting days, the cholesterol levels of the pre-diabetic participants actually decreased by about 12 percent.

“The fat cells themselves are a major contributor to insulin resistance, which can lead to diabetes,” Horne explained. “Because fasting may help to eliminate and break down fat cells, insulin resistance may be frustrated by fasting.”

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