



THE COMPLETE FASTING GUIDE

The Fasting Company

Support your fast. Sharpen your life.

SUPPORT YOUR FAST. SHARPEN YOUR LIFE.

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CHAPTER 1

Why Humans Are Designed To Fast

Fasting Is Not A Trend

When most people hear the word fasting, they immediately think of a modern health trend — something created by biohackers, popularised by social media, or used purely for weight loss. But fasting is far older than any diet, supplement, or fitness movement. It is one of the oldest biological experiences known to mankind. For most of human history there were no supermarkets, refrigerators, or food delivery apps. Food had to be hunted, gathered, tracked and earned. Some days our ancestors ate well. Other days they ate very little. Sometimes they went days without food at all. Yet humanity survived, adapted and thrived.

The Human Body Was Built For Periods Without Food

If fasting were inherently harmful, humans would never have survived long enough to become the dominant species on Earth. Instead, our bodies evolved mechanisms that allow us to function when food becomes scarce. Evolution favoured individuals whose bodies could continue performing during periods without eating. Many of the benefits associated with fasting today are believed to stem from these ancient survival adaptations.

Feast And Famine: The Original Human Diet

For hundreds of thousands of years humans lived within a natural feast-and-famine cycle. A successful hunt could provide an abundance of food. A failed hunt could mean going without. In many ways fasting is not the unusual state — constant eating is. Today many people consume calories from the moment they wake until shortly before they sleep, which is highly unusual from an evolutionary perspective and gives the body little opportunity to access its stored energy reserves.

Your Body Has Multiple Fuel Systems

The human body stores energy in several forms:

- Glucose — circulating sugar in the bloodstream
- Glycogen — stored carbohydrate in the liver and muscles
- Body fat — long-term stored energy
- Ketones — an alternative fuel source produced from fat

Most people spend the majority of their lives relying on glucose and glycogen. Fasting helps the body access stored fat and ketones more efficiently — a process often referred to as metabolic flexibility.

Why Modern Humans Often Struggle

If fasting is natural, why do so many people find it difficult? For many, the body has become accustomed to a constant supply of energy. When food is removed, cravings, irritability, energy fluctuations and brain fog can appear. These experiences are often not signs of starvation — instead, they may reflect the body's transition from one fuel source to another. Like any adaptation, this process can take time and practice.

The Survival Switch

As fasting progresses, the body begins activating systems researchers believe are designed to help humans survive periods without food — including changes associated with lower insulin levels, increased fat mobilisation, rising ketone production, and increased activity in cellular maintenance pathways. This may help explain why many experienced fasters report feeling surprisingly focused and energised during longer fasting periods.

KEY TAKEAWAY

Fasting is not a modern invention. It is one of humanity's oldest biological experiences. The ability to function without food is deeply embedded within our biology, and many of fasting's benefits are believed to stem from ancient survival adaptations that helped our ancestors thrive during periods of scarcity.

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CHAPTER 2

What Happens Inside Your Body During A Fast

One of the biggest misconceptions about fasting is that nothing happens until you reach a certain number of hours. In reality, fasting is a gradual process — your body is constantly adapting as time passes. This chapter walks through the most common stages of fasting in simple terms.

0-4 Hours: The Fed State

After eating, your body is busy digesting and absorbing nutrients. Glucose from your meal is being used as the primary energy source and insulin is elevated. The body has little reason to access stored fat because energy from food is still readily available.

4-8 Hours: Digestion Begins To Slow

As the meal is processed, insulin gradually begins to decline and the body starts moving away from incoming food as its primary fuel source. Most people still feel normal during this stage.

8-12 Hours: Moving Toward The Fasted State

The body increasingly relies on glycogen — stored carbohydrate in the liver and muscles. Think of glycogen as your body's short-term energy reserve. As it's used, the body prepares to access longer-term energy reserves if needed.

12-16 Hours: Ketones Begin To Appear

Think of your body as having two fuel tanks: glucose from food, and stored body fat. When food becomes less available, the liver begins converting stored fat into molecules called ketones, which can be used by both brain and body for energy. Many people report improved focus, steadier energy and reduced hunger as ketone levels begin rising. Growth hormone secretion may also begin increasing during this stage as the body adapts.

16-24 Hours: Fat Burning Accelerates

As glycogen stores continue being used, the body becomes increasingly reliant on stored fat. This is often where people notice hunger comes in waves rather than continuously increasing.

24-36 Hours: The Internal Service Begins

One reason fasting has attracted so much scientific attention is because the body begins shifting resources away from digestion and toward maintenance. Autophagy — meaning "self-eating" — is best understood as your body's internal clean-up and recycling system. Imagine never servicing a car: old parts wear down and performance gradually declines. Your cells face a similar challenge, and autophagy helps the body identify, break down and recycle worn-out materials so valuable resources can be reused.

24-48 Hours: Growth Hormone & Adaptation

Growth hormone is often associated with fitness, but one of its roles during fasting appears to be helping preserve lean tissue while stored body fat is increasingly used for fuel. Ketones often continue rising during this window, and many people report enhanced mental clarity and stable energy levels.

48-72 Hours: Deeper Metabolic Adaptation

By this stage the body has become significantly more adapted to fasting. Ketones are often elevated, fat burning remains high, and cellular maintenance pathways continue operating. Many experienced fasters describe this period as one of clarity, calmness and reduced attachment to food.

Longevity & Healthy Ageing

Fasting has become a major area of interest within longevity research. Scientists are studying how fasting may influence cellular maintenance, mitochondrial health, inflammation, oxidative stress and other pathways associated with healthy ageing. Telomeres — protective caps at the ends of chromosomes, similar to the plastic tips on shoelaces — are one focus of this research, as scientists continue exploring how fasting-related pathways may influence long-term cellular function.

KEY TAKEAWAY

Fasting is far more than simply skipping food. It is a biological process that gradually shifts the body from digestion and storage toward adaptation, repair, fat burning and cellular maintenance. Understanding what is happening inside your body can make fasting feel less intimidating and far more empowering.

CHAPTER 3

The Benefits Of Fasting

Most people begin fasting because they want to lose weight. While fat loss can certainly occur, it is only one of many potential benefits. Fasting may influence energy production, hormones, metabolism, cellular maintenance, food awareness and mental resilience — adaptations many researchers believe originate from ancient survival mechanisms.

Growth Hormone: A Built-In Survival Mechanism

Growth hormone plays a major role in growth and development during childhood, and continues supporting recovery and tissue maintenance throughout adulthood. Researchers believe one reason growth hormone rises during fasting is to help preserve lean tissue while stored body fat is increasingly used for fuel. It's worth noting these fasting-related rises are typically transient, and their downstream effects remain an active area of ongoing research.

Metabolic Flexibility: Relearning How To Burn Fuel

Most modern people rely heavily on a constant supply of food, and many struggle when meals are delayed because their bodies have become less efficient at switching fuel sources. Fasting helps retrain the body to use glucose, glycogen, fat and ketones more efficiently. Many people report fewer energy crashes, reduced cravings and steadier energy as metabolic flexibility improves.

Cellular Autophagy: Your Internal Clean-Up Crew

Autophagy — cellular recycling and renewal — helps identify, break down and recycle worn-out cellular components, allowing valuable materials to be reused while damaged components are removed.

Why The Nobel Prize Matters

For many years scientists knew autophagy existed but didn't fully understand how it worked. Japanese scientist Yoshinori Ohsumi helped uncover the mechanisms behind autophagy, work considered so important that he was awarded the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine in 2016.

Blood Sugar Control & Insulin Sensitivity

Fasting creates periods where insulin levels can fall. Research suggests fasting may help support insulin sensitivity and healthier blood sugar regulation — this remains one of the most active areas of metabolic health research.

Brain Function & Mental Clarity

Many people experience headaches, fatigue or brain fog during the early adaptation phase of fasting. However, once the body becomes more efficient at using stored fat and ketones for fuel, many fasters report improved focus and more stable energy. Ketones provide an alternative fuel source for the brain, and researchers continue exploring fasting's relationship with cognitive health.

Reduced Systemic Inflammation

Researchers continue exploring how fasting may influence inflammatory pathways. Many fasters report reductions in aches, stiffness and feelings of physical heaviness following fasting periods, though individual experiences vary.

Digestive Rest & Gut Recovery

Digestion, absorption and nutrient processing all require energy. Fasting provides periods where the digestive system can temporarily slow down, and many people report feeling lighter and less bloated during fasting periods.

Longevity, Healthy Ageing & Telomeres

Scientists are investigating how fasting may influence cellular maintenance, mitochondrial health, oxidative stress, inflammation and other pathways associated with long-term health — including telomere protection, an active and exciting field within longevity science.

KEY TAKEAWAY

Fasting is far more than a fat-loss tool. It may influence hormones, metabolism, cellular maintenance, blood sugar regulation, mental performance, digestive function and healthy ageing pathways — many stemming from biological systems that helped our ancestors survive periods without food.

CHAPTER 4

Why Most People Struggle With Fasting

If fasting is so natural, why do so many people struggle with it? Most people simply aren't yet adapted to it. Modern lifestyles provide constant access to food, meaning many people rarely give their bodies a chance to switch fuel systems. The first few fasting experiences can feel challenging — the good news is that most of these symptoms are temporary and manageable.

Headaches

Why: Often linked to sodium depletion, mild dehydration, caffeine withdrawal, or the body's adaptation to lower insulin levels.

How to reduce it: Stay hydrated, ensure adequate sodium intake, ease into fasting gradually.

Fatigue & Low Energy

Why: The body is learning to transition from relying on glucose to using stored fat and ketones — energy levels may temporarily fluctuate during adaptation.

How to reduce it: Electrolyte support, consistent fasting practice, quality sleep and recovery.

Brain Fog

Why: The brain is adapting to a different fuel source. While many people eventually experience improved mental clarity, some initially notice the opposite. The good news: many people find brain fog improves significantly once ketone production increases.

Cravings

Why: Many cravings are not true hunger — they're often driven by habit, boredom, stress, routine or emotional triggers. Key insight: cravings often come in waves. If you wait patiently, they frequently pass on their own.

Irritability & Dizziness

Low electrolytes, caffeine withdrawal and the adjustment to fasting can all contribute to irritability during the early stages. Dizziness often occurs because, as insulin levels fall, the body retains less sodium and water. Adequate hydration and sufficient sodium intake can help reduce both.

Poor Sleep

Why: Some people experience increased alertness or heightened awareness while fasting, particularly during the adaptation phase. The good news: many experienced fasters report improvements in sleep quality once they become more adapted.

The Adaptation Phase

This is perhaps the most important concept in this chapter. Many people assume that feeling uncomfortable means fasting is not for them. In reality, they may simply be experiencing the adaptation phase — just as the first few gym sessions can feel uncomfortable while the body adapts, fasting can feel challenging while the body learns to use stored energy more efficiently.

Where TFC Fits In

Most people don't stop fasting because they lack motivation. They stop because they feel terrible. Headaches, fatigue, dizziness and discomfort cause many people to quit before experiencing the benefits fasting can offer.

Every fast costs your body sodium, potassium, magnesium and key minerals — no matter how experienced you are. That isn't a beginner problem that fades with practice. A five-year faster loses just as much sodium on a 24-hour fast as someone doing it for the first time. TFC was designed to replace what fasting takes, every time you fast.

And the longer or more often you fast, the more your nervous system benefits from calm, steady support — which is where L-theanine comes in. This isn't something fasting depletes from your body; it's something that supports how the fast feels, particularly as fasts get longer or more frequent. TFC was designed to replace what fasting takes, and support what fasting asks of you — every time.

THE FASTING COMPANY — LAUNCHING SOON

Join the waitlist for early access and a founder's discount: thefastingcompany.co.uk

KEY TAKEAWAY

Most fasting symptoms are not signs of failure. They are often signs of adaptation. Understanding what is happening inside your body can help you approach fasting with greater confidence and make it easier to remain consistent long enough to experience the benefits.

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CHAPTER 5

How To Fast Successfully

By now you understand why humans are designed to fast, what happens during a fast, the benefits it can provide, and the challenges many people face. The next step is learning how to fast successfully. Fasting should not feel like punishment — it should feel like a skill that improves with practice.

Preparing For Your First Fast

Start smaller than you think you need to. Many people jump straight into advanced fasting protocols and quickly become discouraged. Begin with shorter fasting windows and gradually build confidence.

Choosing The Right Fast

- **12-Hour Fast** — perfect for beginners
- **14-Hour Fast** — a natural progression
- **16-Hour Fast** — one of the most popular approaches
- **24-Hour Fast** — a major milestone
- **48-Hour Fast** — requires greater attention to electrolytes
- **72-Hour Fast** — best reserved for experienced fasters

Hydration & Electrolytes

Many symptoms people blame on fasting are actually linked to hydration and electrolyte balance. The three most important electrolytes during fasting are sodium, potassium and magnesium — supporting these can help reduce headaches, dizziness, fatigue and poor performance.

Exercise & Breaking Your Fast

Walking, strength training and even some forms of cardio can often be performed successfully while fasting. When breaking a fast, avoid highly processed foods — start with whole foods, quality protein, vegetables and healthy fats.

The Most Common Mistakes

- Doing too much too soon
- Ignoring hydration
- Neglecting electrolytes
- Expecting perfection
- Giving up during adaptation

Finding Your Fasting Rhythm

General Health & Beginners: 12–16 hour fasts performed several times per week.

Moderate Practice: A 24-hour fast once every one to two weeks.

Experienced Fasters: A 48-hour fast once per month.

Advanced Fasters: A 72-hour fast every one to three months, approached gradually.

My Recommended Starting Point

For most people, a simple 16:8 fasting schedule on most days combined with a 24-hour fast every one to two weeks provides an excellent balance between sustainability and results.

The TFC Philosophy

Fasting should not feel like suffering. It should feel like a skill that becomes easier over time. But easier doesn't mean your body needs less support — every fast still calls on the same sodium, potassium and magnesium, whether it's your first or your fiftieth. TFC was designed to replace what fasting takes and support what fasting asks of you, helping make fasting more comfortable and sustainable for as long as you choose to practise it.

KEY TAKEAWAY

Successful fasting is not about willpower alone. It is about understanding your body, supporting it properly and allowing adaptation to occur. Start small, stay consistent and focus on progress rather than perfection.

CHAPTER 6

Additional Resources & Final Thoughts

Who Should Not Fast?

While fasting can be a valuable tool for many people, it is not appropriate for everyone. Individuals who are pregnant or breastfeeding, children and teenagers who are still growing, people with a history of eating disorders, and those with certain medical conditions should seek professional guidance before fasting. If you are taking medication or have any health concerns, consult a qualified healthcare professional.

Breaking Common Fasting Myths

Myth: Fasting Puts You Into Starvation Mode. Short-term fasting is not the same as starvation — it is a normal biological process humans have experienced throughout history.

Myth: You Will Lose All Your Muscle. The body has mechanisms believed to help preserve lean tissue during fasting, including the rise in growth hormone researchers believe is one reason muscle is protected during fasting periods.

Myth: You Must Eat Every 2-3 Hours. Humans survived for thousands of years without constant snacking.

Myth: Fasting Is Only About Weight Loss. Many people are interested in fasting because of its potential effects on metabolic health, mental clarity, discipline and cellular maintenance pathways.

Frequently Asked Questions

What Breaks A Fast? Meals, protein shakes, sugary drinks and calorie-containing foods will generally break a fast. Water, electrolytes and other non-caloric options are commonly used during fasting periods.

Can I Drink Coffee While Fasting? Many people choose black coffee; others prefer water-only fasting.

Can I Exercise While Fasting? Yes — many people walk, strength train and exercise while fasting. Listen to your body and progress gradually.

Will Fasting Slow My Metabolism? Short-term fasting and long-term starvation are not the same thing.

How Much Water Should I Drink? Drink consistently throughout the day and pay attention to thirst, activity levels and environmental conditions.

Your First 7-Day Fasting Challenge

- Day 1-2: 12-hour fast
- Day 3-4: 14-hour fast
- Day 5-6: 16-hour fast
- Day 7: Reflect and decide which schedule feels most sustainable for you

Final Thoughts

Fasting is one of humanity's oldest biological experiences. Whether your goal is improved health, greater self-discipline, better metabolic flexibility, enhanced mental clarity, or simply a healthier relationship with food, fasting offers a practical tool that costs nothing and can be adapted to almost any lifestyle.

KEY TAKEAWAY

Fasting is not about suffering. It is about creating an environment where the body can access many of its natural survival, adaptation and maintenance systems. Learn the principles, apply them consistently, and allow the journey to unfold one fast at a time.

READY TO MAKE FASTING EASIER?

You now understand the why and the how of fasting better than most people ever will.

TFC was built for the part fasting doesn't teach you in a guide — the hours where your body needs support, not willpower. Clean electrolytes, calming L-theanine and trace minerals, designed to help you stay consistent, without anything that pulls you out of your fast.

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