

# FASTING PROTOCOLS

There are many different fasting protocols but there is simply no 'best' one. What works best for one person may be completely ineffective for someone else. When it comes to fasting the key is to be open to a degree of trial and error.

## Entry Level Fasting

### 1. NO Snacking

Sounds crazy that this should even be a part of this definition but in reality people eat way to often. The myth that small frequent meals are health enhancing has been perpetuated over the last few decades and this has really worked against the health of modern nations. If all you do is eat 3 meals per day and no snacks, your health will be better off.

### 2. Overnight Fast

Combined with no snacking an extended overnight fast is a must. Like sleep, this is an opportunity for your body to re-energise and re-vitalise. It is a complete break for your digestive system and an opportunity for you to really get into your fat stores and start using them (that's if you haven't over done the carbs during the day).

How long should this overnight fast be?

- 12 hours - at an absolute minimum (daily)
- Pushing this fast out to 13-14 hours could be the little boost you are looking for in terms of your overall health. This would be implemented as part of a daily routine

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## Intermediate Fasting Protocol

### 1. Extended Overnight Fast

- 16 hour fasting – the 16:8 protocol has gained some popularity of late. This protocol involves 16 hours overnight fast and an 8-hour window for eating. Generally this means skipping one meal per day. Popularised by Martin Berkhan.
- 20 hour fasting – this has been called the ‘Warrior diet’ and involves eating all your food in a 4 hour window in the evening

### 2. 24-Hour Fasts

A full day of fasting e.g. dinner to dinner or breakfast to breakfast (whatever works for you). Remember this is a zero calorie fast meaning that water, mineral water, black tea and coffee, herbal tea and strained broth IS acceptable during this period. Avoiding dehydration is one of the keys to being able to sustain this length of fast.

### 3. 5:2 Approach

This is a slightly different approach to other protocols listed here, in that this fasting protocol is not a zero calorie approach but rather a significantly reduced calorie approach. The protocol involves following your usual diet for 5 days per week (and at this point I would be hoping that your usual diet is LCHF) and then 2 days of significantly reduced intake. Michael Morsley, who popularised this approach, recommended no more than 500 calories for these 2 days per week. These 500 calories can be consumed as you desire i.e. all in one go or spread out over the course of the day. Many have found success in having these calories coming only from fat e.g. in the form of a bullet proof coffee or a tbsp. of coconut oil or MCT oil (Note: a bullet proof coffee made with 1tbsp grass fed butter and 1 tbsp MCT would be approximately 270 calories). If done in this form, this is also referred to as a “Fat Fast” and can be a great way to boost ketone levels.

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## Hard Core Fasting Protocol

### 1. Consecutive Days of 24-Hour Fasts

Back to back 24-hour fasts have been shown to be extremely beneficial in terms of allowing individuals to really boost ketone levels. The level of ketones observed in the second 24-hour period has been shown to be significantly greater than in the first 24-hour period. Doing 24 hour fasts is a great way to give yourself a real boost but still having that one meal a day to look forward too and enjoy (which may assist in maintaining a level of 'normality in your family life)

### 2. Alternate Days 24-Hour Fasts

This is 24 hours of fasting followed by a 'normal' day of eating, then back to 24 hours fasting, on an ongoing basis. Dr Krista Varady, who popularised this diet recommended that 'fasting' days were actually 500 calorie days and not zero calorie days. In that respect this approach is very similar to the 5:2 approach. You could however choose for your fast days to be zero calorie days, if this approach worked for you.

### 3. 36 - 42 Hours Fast

This is taking the 24 hour fast that little step further and involves pushing yourself that little bit further to either breakfast (36 hours) or lunch (42 hours) on the second day.

### 4. Multi-Day Fasts

This is really taking things up a notch (a big notch).NB! If you have a metabolic disease or are taking medication, multi-day fasting should only be done under the supervision of a doctor who is familiar with fasting. (Ask me for recommendation). This can involve anything from 3 days to 5 or 7 days and beyond. Personally I have had a handful of patients who have fasted for 10 days (zero calories) and have done remarkably well. For individuals who are significantly overweight or suffer from metabolic disease, multi-day fasting can be life changing. For individuals who are close to their ideal weight, at their ideal weight or below their ideal weight multi-day fasting is not recommended and can be dangerous. It is important to be sensible if you decide that this is the path you would like to take. My suggestions: 1. Consult a doctor familiar with fasting and the associated risks and benefits; 2. Listen to your body - you may feel hungry at times but you should never feel sick; 3. Fluid and electrolytes are vital during the fast 4. Multi-day fasting is significantly easier when you are fat adapted. Starting with shorter fasts and following a low carb diet prior to adding multi-day fasts to your regime is definitely what I would be recommending

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## Tips and Considerations

- It is significantly easier to fast when you are fat adapted – following a low carb diet is the way to go
- It is recommended to give a number of different protocols a go before deciding what you prefer and what works best for you. You may be surprised! I have had a large amount of people who prefer longer duration fasts less frequently.
- All of these fasting protocols allow the body to lower insulin levels for the period during the fast. This is precisely what helps to break the viscous cycle of high insulin perpetuating insulin resistance. Due to individuals having different degrees of insulin resistance and different levels of insulin secretion, what works for one person may very well not work for another. In addition it may take longer for the benefits and weight loss to kick in, this is particularly true if you are starting from a point of severe insulin resistance and/or very high insulin levels.
- The frequency of each of these approaches can be altered to suit you and can change over time. This adds another element of flexibility e.g. you could simply throw in a 24 hour fast monthly or fortnightly or you could do 3 x consecutive days of 24 hour fasting each week. It all depends on your goals and what works for you!

The flexibility of fasting is what I love most about it! Try one way, if it works, brilliant, keep doing it, if it doesn't try another way. With so many protocols there is bound to be one that works for you.