

Intermittent Fasting

Runner's World (UK) · 1 Mar 2021 · 58 · INTERMITTENT FASTING

(IF) is based on the time windows when you consume food. Generally, IF refers to periods of fasting that last less than 24 hours but are done more frequently, from daily to weekly. A popular version is to fast for 16 hours – only eating, for example, between 11am and 7pm. Another method is to fast just under 24 hours, say from dinner to dinner, and is sometimes called one meal a day (OMAD).

PROS If weight loss is your ultimate goal, IF can be a reliable method because limiting the time frame to eat generally results in a calorie deficit. Eating like this can actually help you drop from three to eight per cent of your weight over three to 24 weeks, according to a review published in the journal *Translational*

Research. (Proponents also say it helps with health markers such as lowering cholesterol or helping fight heart disease.)

And IF can keep insulin levels low, says Dr Jason Fung, author of *The Complete Guide to Fasting*, thus increasing hormones such as noradrenaline (a neurotransmitter involved in your fight-or-flight response) and human growth hormone. This could mean that once your body has adjusted to a fasting schedule, you may train with more energy, recover faster and have more mental clarity, which is often touted with the diet.

CONS Overeating is common in the periods when you can eat. Also, the dropout rate of people who tried alternate-day fasting was higher than that of dieters who restricted their calories every day, according to a study published in *JAMA Internal Medicine*.

Pregnant women, children, diabetics, anyone trying to build muscle mass and those with disordered eating tendencies should avoid IF, says Natalie Allen, a clinical assistant professor of biomedical sciences at Missouri State University, US.

BOTTOM LINE You can tinker with IF to fit your training (like fasting at night for morning exercise), but if you're working out regularly, keeping yourself satisfied all day on IF can be tough.