

Fast for the Earth

“Fasting: Physical FAQs”

The following basic information has been developed from some reputable Internet sources and from the personal experience of some Friends of the Fast for the Earth. We offer it in good faith, but we are not medical professionals. Everyone who might wish to participate in the Fast for the Earth by abstaining from food should make their final decision based on their own judgment and, if warranted, the advice of their doctor.

This document does not address the spiritual or ethical aspects of fasting. We encourage you to explore those aspects of fasting on your own.

1. **What is a fast?** Fasting is voluntary abstinence from food or drink or both.
2. **Does fasting that is undertaken for spiritual or ethical reasons also offer physical benefits?** Yes. Various studies have shown that fasting, especially when done for an extended time or on a regular basis, can offer the following benefits:
 - a. It can help reduce clogged arteries.
 - b. It can help remove toxins from the body, excreting them through the breath, tongue, urine and skin.
 - c. It can help curb appetite.
 - d. It can help reduce body weight.
 - e. It can help the body rest, as it takes a break from the very demanding task of digestion.
 - f. It can help in preventing or delaying the onset of age-related illnesses such as diabetes, heart disease and Alzheimer’s.
 - g. It can increase longevity.

Many individuals find that while they are fasting, some or all of their health-related problems are alleviated and even become negligible.

3. **Who can fast?** Anyone who is in generally good health may fast. *If you routinely take any medications, consult your doctor first.* Although fasts are sometimes prescribed for medical purposes and are known to provide health benefits to many people, if your body is already under strain, a fast may be difficult or even dangerous for you. *Never fast under these circumstances:*
 - a. If you are recovering from recent surgery.
 - b. If you are too thin (if unsure, ask your doctor).
 - c. If you are prone to bulimia or anorexia.
 - d. If you have severe weakness or anemia.
 - e. If you suffer from bleeding ulcers, a blood disease, cancer or heart disease.
 - f. If you have chronic problems with your heart, lungs, liver, kidneys or other vital organs.
 - g. If you have blood sugar problems, such as hyperglycemia or diabetes.
 - h. If you are pregnant or nursing.

If you and/or your doctor decide that you should not fast physically, you are welcome to participate in the Fast for the Earth in some other way. For example, you could abstain from driving your car for a certain period of time and choose instead to walk or ride your bike.

4. **What forms does fasting take?** Fasting takes three primary forms:
 - a. **The Absolute Fast.** In this type of fast you abstain from both food and water. We don’t recommend this type of fast. It is very dangerous and should never be undertaken for more than three days.

- b. **The Partial Fast.** In this type of fast you restrict your foods but don't totally abstain from eating. *Some variations:*
 - i. Choose to avoid certain foods (e.g., caffeine, meat, fatty foods, sugar, alcohol).
 - ii. Choose to eat only certain kinds of foods (e.g., fresh fruits or vegetables).
 - iii. Eat fewer meals each day.
- c. **The Normal Fast.** In this type of fast, which is the most common, you abstain from all food but drink water and/or juice. *Here are three variations:*
 - i. **Water Fast.** In this fast you only drink water.
 - ii. **Juice Fast.** In this fast you drink water and also fresh fruit and vegetable juices. Some people favor juice-fasting because it is gentler on the body than a straight water fast. Toxins are released more slowly into the bloodstream, and they are neutralized and excreted more efficiently because of the high mineral and vitamin content of the juices.
 - iii. **Clear Liquids Fast.** In this fast you drink water, clear fruit juices, vegetable broth, and caffeine-free herbal teas.

If you are on medication, or if you have health concerns, consult with your doctor and discuss the type of fast that would be most appropriate for you.

- 5. **How long does a fast last?** It can last as long as you wish. It can be as short as one meal or weeks-long. Duration may be the most difficult part of your fast to plan. Choose a length of time that seems appropriate for you and your body. If you are new to fasting, start with a shorter fast. Here are some different fasting periods that you might consider (*this list is not exhaustive*):
 - a. One meal a day for a certain period of time (i.e., for one day only, or once during a given week, or once each week ...)
 - b. Dawn to dusk (i.e., for one day only, or for every day during one week, or ...)
 - c. One day a week (for one week or more)
 - d. A certain number of days or weeks in a row
- 6. **How can I prepare for a fast?** If you intend to do a "normal fast" for more than a day, you should ready yourself, physically and mentally, for the experience. Here are some suggestions that might prove helpful:
 - a. Plan to do your fast during a period when it won't interfere with your daily routine or public commitments, and when you are unlikely to be under a lot of stress.
 - b. Reduce your intake of food for one or two days before the fast (*for longer fasts, one to two weeks*). During this time, eat mostly fruits and vegetables, minimizing or avoiding fats, meats and desserts. Try eating one light meal a day (water or juice or tea, fresh fruit, fresh vegetable), at around 3 pm.
 - c. Avoid alcohol and caffeine. Cut down on or eliminate nicotine.
 - d. Limit your intake of nutritional supplements.
 - e. Start drinking more water.
 - f. Start reducing your amount of physical activity.
 - g. If possible, ask a good friend or two (or more) to support you through your fast by offering encouragement, keeping you company at your usual mealtime(s), or breaking your fast with you. They might even decide to participate with you in the Fast for the Earth.
- 7. **How do I fast?** Decide what kind of fast you want to do, and for how long. Prepare yourself for the fast. Then, when the time comes, begin your fast with a positive attitude. As your fast progresses, remain focused on the reason(s) why you have chosen to fast.

If you plan to do a "normal fast" for longer than a day, follow these general suggestions:

- a. Drink ample fluids (at least seven to ten glasses, eight ounces each, every day). Among other things, this prevents dehydration and flushes toxins.

- b. Do less physical activity and avoid all strenuous exercise or work. You might choose to do some yoga or light walking to keep your muscles stretched and strong and to help with detoxification.
- c. Rest more than usual but try to maintain your usual sleep pattern (assuming that it is good).
- d. Consider taking a potassium supplement to help maintain your electrolyte balance.

Special Suggestions for Water-Fasting. Drink only spring water. Avoid tap water—it can introduce toxins and chemicals into your body. Also avoid distilled water—it has no electrolytes, which you need. One variation of this fast is the *Water, Honey and Lemon Fast*, which is a great way to cleanse the body: Drink warm (spring) water mixed to taste with some lemon juice and honey. The lemon juice boosts electrolytes; the honey provides some nutrients.

Special Suggestions for Juice-Fasting.

- a. Try to drink only freshly squeezed juice from fresh fruits and vegetables. If that isn't possible, drink juices from juice bars, health food stores or the health-food section of your local grocery. Try to avoid packed juices that are processed and chemically preserved.
- b. Use *organic* fruits and vegetables to make your juices. If that isn't possible, thoroughly wash and peel your produce to eliminate harmful chemicals.
- c. Avoid citrus fruits since they cause acidity on an empty stomach. Some of the most commonly used fruits and vegetables are apple, cranberry, carrot, celery, cabbage, kale, beetroot, spinach and other greens. Try to drink both fruit and vegetable juices.

- 8. What will I experience physically while fasting?** During the first day or two, it is common to feel hungry, weak, nauseous, fatigued or dizzy. You may also spend a lot of time in the bathroom as your body cleans itself out. Other common side effects in the first few days are irritability, hypoglycemia, headaches, stomachaches, mild fever, sleeplessness and food cravings. Such symptoms gradually fade, usually starting around day three, as your body adjusts to the fast. If you experience any of them, don't be concerned. Avoid taking medications to ease them. If the symptoms begin to feel overwhelming, however, simply break your fast (*see below*).

As your body detoxifies, you may notice a thickening of the tongue, bad breath, skin eruptions and dark urine. You may also feel more vulnerable emotionally. This is normal.

As your fast proceeds over days (or weeks), your body will lose its desire for food. If you are taking juices, you may find that your energy level remains the same or even increases. If taking only water, you may experience steadily decreasing bodily strength.

- 9. How do I end a fast?** Whatever you do, don't binge. If your "normal fast" has been relatively short (a day or two), break it with a light meal of fruit, vegetables or thin soup (no meat). If it has been longer, introduce food more slowly in order to allow for the return of digestive secretions after the shut-down of the digestive system:
- a. If you have been water-fasting, drink juice first, then graduate to food (*as follows*).
 - b. When ready for food, eat a half-serving of fruit, then gradually increase the amounts of fruit over the course of the first day. (*Avoid citrus.*) Then graduate to soft foods: pureed foods, boiled vegetables, applesauce, soups, etc. Finally, move on to pasta. Add proteins last.
 - c. Animal proteins, fats and sweets should be added no earlier than the third day of breaking an extended fast.
 - d. Always keep food portions small and you will feel better, because your stomach will have shrunk. Rebuild your normal intake of food over a couple of days (if in fact you wish to return to your pre-fast "normal").
 - e. Some people advise that you take as many days returning to full meals as you spent abstaining from food.
 - f. You might enjoy breaking your fast, whatever its length, in fellowship with other people.