

## What do people say about IF?

Intermittent Fasting (IF) is an interesting phenomenon that can lead us to a road to healthy living. Anyone seriously thinking of IF must try to understand the groundworks and intricacies of the concept. Wide ranging information is freely available through internet and Y-tubes by a number of renowned experts.

Last two postings on IF on this website has briefly touched on the benefits of IF. Exchanges from the interest generated led me to ask my friends and associates to write a short note of their experience with it. Most of them were new starters and this blog is all about how they described it, including myself.

IF may not be suitable for those who are effectively eating sensibly and have no issues with health such as overweight or other symptoms of health conditions. Many keep very good health without IF but maintaining healthy lifestyle, eating wisely and remaining active, even beyond seventies.

Most of the respondents contacted have been following IF between 4-6 months. The age group was well spread out and ranged from early thirties to late seventies and consisted of both genders (F6, M9). It included both working and semi-retired people from a number of countries (India-6, Lesotho-1, Canada-1, Australia-2, Thailand-3, Netherlands-2). Majority of respondents found IF to be easy to follow and endure. Reports were consistent with small or large weight losses over initial period and slowing down after a few weeks. Substantial weight loss was apparent among those who were overweight, which is most of us. Those who were of normal weight did not feel the need for weight reduction but experienced other positive effects of IF. Most reported a feeling of wellness, including clear minds and sound sleep. Maintaining fasting period was mixed with minor shortfalls due to reasons provided. There were also people who found it not to be a suitable lifestyle for them and with good reasons.

Here is what I received in response, in their words with minor edits here and there, to what they think about IF.

**PK:** I am a working male, 76 years of age. Ordinarily, I would have gained more weight during holidays, however, one month of intermittent fasting (6:00pm super and 11:00am brunch) has helped me to have a feel good about my digestion. My wife thinks I look trimmer around the waist. I hope to continue with my intermittent fasting in the coming months. Continuing from there, on my attempts to follow IF since October 2021, I must say that it has been a fruitful experience and I am very glad that I started with 16-8hrs IF programs. In the last 6 months period I have had a considerable amount of shrinking of my belly. My girth around the waste is down by 7 to 8cms., whilst my body weight has fallen to 82 kg from 89 kg (BMI from 28.7 to 26.5) and I hope to reduce it further in the remaining six months of the year 2022. Beside the general feeling of wellbeing and even not contracting the COVID-19 virus to date, I could attribute all this to the IF program. At this age, I am able to participate in daily sports and small amounts of exercising with ease and to continue my professional activities semiretired. The best part I like is that my mental sharpness remains intact and memory is strong. I do get a feeling of forgetfulness sometimes but it's not serious. I used to be mindful of my prostate

activity a year ago, but now after six months of IF, I have an uninterrupted sound sleep whole night.

**JK:** Writing about my feedback on Intermittent fasting, it was very difficult at first and it took time to not eat regular meals. I hope I will be able to continue this when I start working after the holidays. Let's see how it works out once I get back to full time work, as I am 72 Years old now. Continuing from my initial attempt on IF, my experience for the last 4-6 months has been good. I feel that it is the right way to control weight increase at my age. Apart from restricting diet, IF is also useful in keeping me on my toes at strenuous work for over 7-8hrs daily, six days a week. It helps me to feel like working without getting exhausted. I have been a work alcoholic all my life and thankfully my age does not restrict me from hyperactivity. I think that the idea of dieting as per IF routine is marvelous. It does not disturb me with hunger pangs at my daily work. I am able to relax after a day's hard work (of looking after a large school with hundreds of teachers and students) and fall asleep as soon as I hit the pillow. I am sure that in the coming months I have much to gain from the program and I am very enthusiastic about it.

**PN&S:** Before embarking on my IF regimen, I was feeling heavier, less energetic and getting easily tired on my morning jogs. With regards to diet, I had cutdown on all processed sugars since November 2021, reduced starch, maintained chicken meat consumption, increased the intake of vegetables and fruits. Then I discovered IF via Dr Jason Fung's YouTube video on 29th December 2021. I started practicing IF (18hrs fasting and 6hrs feeding time) taking my breakfast at 10am and afternoon lunch at 4pm. My weight on 2nd Jan was 87.4kg. By 3rd February 2022 my weight had gone down to 82.9kg. I was really starting to feel good; stronger, more energetic and lighter. On 11th February 2022, I started having only one meal a day at 1pm in order to get better results. On 14th February, my weight had gone down to 82kg, mostly from my belly fat I guess, and on 21st February I weighed 81.4Kg. Now in May I am 77.4Kg. I feel lighter, more joyful, more fulfilled (able to achieve my health goals), my energy levels skyrocketed, general mood got far better, work productivity increased. A drop of 10kg of weight in 4months from IF is my experience. IF has been an exciting and life-changing journey for my health and well-being. I continue to drink sufficient water during fasting time and I am excited about how IF is helping me to discover the freedom which accompanies the feeling of taking charge of my own good health and nutrition. I also encouraged my sister in Canada to try IF for the weight she was trying to lose. I spoke to her about IF, and she took the challenge straightway. Within a few days she had lost weight from 71.6 to 68.4 Kg and hopefully continuing to benefit from it.

**MA:** Thanks for introducing me to IF and I have been practicing it as best I can for over four weeks. I work towards 16 hours of fasting everyday but don't achieve that as often as I would like to, at present.

It doesn't take much discipline to do this and I hope that, with time, I can graduate to a regular fasting regime of 16 hours. I am only interested in the health aspect of IF as I do not have a weight problem. I had complicated hernia surgery recently and I feel that the fasting and the discipline of practicing IF holds me in good stead. I have stopped eating heaps of chocolates EVERYDAY. My consumption of alcohol is minimal and only in a social context. I feel healthier since I started IF and am confident, from my early experience of following this program, that

with consistent practice, I will be able to achieve far better results in the future.

**ELS:** Hi Surinder. I have read your most recent article on IF. Interesting, and, I am sure valuable. However, never having been overweight, never having dieted to lose weight, and, always having been three meals a day man without snacking, I really know nothing about such matters. In fact, David Sinclair suggesting that fasting might be beneficial in the same way that an ice bath may be beneficial, mainly because it challenges the body and activates dormant survival mechanisms has been my only thought about fasting. Mind you, Nutritionists always taught me to put in fuel at the start of the day. They advocated "breakfast like a King, lunch like a Prince and dine like a pauper". However, I am happy to talk with you about it. Times do change, as does good advice based on new thinking and new evidence.

**TD:** Why I fast Intermittently? As I transition from my 20s to 30s, I noticed that my body wasn't able to keep up with my daily activities, as it used to. While talking to you, I took stock of the number of meals I was taking in a day. Turned out I was eating 4 meals before 2pm. I was under the impression that food was converted into fuel, for all the running around I did in a day. I gave IF a shot and the results were immediate. Instead of erratic spikes in my energy, I had more sustained energy levels. As the number of meals were limited, I became more aware of what was going into my body and now have an understanding of what works and what doesn't. My level of concentration has improved and I'm sleeping much better.

**PK:** Good morning. The concept of Intermittent fasting is one of the best solutions to stay fit and healthy. In my case if I am home and not traveling, I am able to undertake IF perfectly. When I was home, I made one mistake, taking rice. Getting rid of rice was a bit difficult because of cravings. This went on for two months. Despite taking rice I was feeling a lot of difference in my health and I was so energetic and focused. Then my traveling became intense. During travel it was impossible to maintain the same momentum that I was doing at home. Reasons being, first, when you meet the people during lunch hours or snack time, we cannot say no to them, as it might hurt them and affect my business. Second, during travel when you drive the car for long hours you tend to get exhausted and your body requires a good meal to get a good sleep. Third, food outside is adulterated and if you order one thing it is not good then you have to go to another place and order something else to get your stomach full so that you can have proper sleep. Four, when you are on travel you cannot maintain the timings as you do at home. These are some bottlenecks which will stop us from doing IF while traveling. Hope you can suggest some solutions to overcome these challenges.

**P&GSK:** GSK writes, yes, although we have not reached to 18hrs of fasting but still we can feel the changes. I am 76 years (male) following IF since February 2022. I am enjoying it. No side effects. I have already down to 98 from 100kg. I hope to lose it further with continuation of IF which of course I intend to. And Mrs. GSK adds, I am still waiting for some evident change. Yes, earlier staying without food in the morning was difficult but now I am getting used to it. Hope to be able to add to this soon.

**NK:** After falling into bad eating and lifestyle habits I decided to go to Wellness and Detox Spa in Phuket for a 9day fasting and cleanse program. I've been there a few times before (6 & 12 years

ago) and while I don't really believe a lot of the new age guff associated with it the simple total fasting regime in a supportive and regulated environment with people in a similar frame of mind was a benefit. It has kick started things and helped me segue into a standard 16:8 IF program. I find the 12pm-8pm eating window program no problem and start the day off with a black tea with apple cider vinegar. Effects are going slowly with a lot of ups and downs (of weight) but overall, it is moving ahead. My weight has gone from 89 kg pre Wellness and Detox Spa to 84.3kg (+,-). I think now I need to focus on what I'm eating, doing some %\$#! exercise and maybe moving to a stricter One Meal a Day regime. A regular (every 3 months) total 36-48 hour fast is planned as well but that is tricky when eating with others is a social obligation.

**SE:** When I started with IF I was planning to document along the way and give you regular updates. Unfortunately, that didn't really work out. After doing it for 4 weeks now (Monday-Friday) I have noticed the following changes: weight loss 1.5 kg (BMI 21.9), during eating times I'm constantly hungry and looking for opportunities to eat. I'm eating more than I normally would. I am in a very grumpy mood in the morning with a very low blood sugar and I didn't feel a boost of energy. Unfortunately, I didn't have the benefits from fasting. I thought about it and I think it has to do with me cutting out refined sugars from my diet a long time ago. When I did this for the first time, I went through a withdrawal with symptoms as headaches and strong cravings. But after 1 week it changed into a very balanced way of eating. No cravings, no highs and lows in blood sugar (no hunger dips, snack cravings). More energy, less tiredness. So maybe I got the benefits which other people feel after IF already from cutting out sugars? I didn't really start intermittent fasting for weight loss. My weight is ok and has pretty much been like this all my life. At the moment 67kg at 175 cm. Before I was pregnant with my first daughter, I was 62kg. I have never dieted in my life but I was curious about IF and I wanted to support my partner in doing it. He feels that IF has been beneficial for him.

**SK&AK:** Although I have talked about IF in my two earlier blogs, it is here that we describe how we manage to keep up with 18:6 IF and will be fare to give a brief account of our experience with IF. We manage fasting period to be 16-17 hours. We have had significant weight loss as we were both overweight. For me, it was immediately after starting IF and the weight stopped falling after a few weeks and has remained steady. After losing over ten Kg in first two weeks, have reached normal BMI (23-24) but my wife has still some way to go. But we feel very well and have had no problem in maintaining the fasting period. Mornings, when we have to wait until 11am we find various ways to pass that time by going out on some chores and finding excuses to not to eat early.

Sure, we do feel hungry during fasting period and the two important aspects of fasting are the hunger spasms and the desire to eat even when one is not hungry. I have learnt from experience that if the food on my mind is not in the fridge, there is no issue, unlike approaching the fridge and taking out my favorite ice cream, chocolate magnum! It is also helpful that we learn to enjoy more healthy and nutritious foods to eat between meals, when one wants to eat. As one of my friends pointed out, we can console ourselves by thinking that our efforts are in some way helping our planet and my wife points out that IF has reduced the amount of money we used to spend on food.

When I am going for walks or cycling in the morning, still fasting, the aromas of cooking on my

routes sets up a sudden desire to eat. Fortunately, I can't do much about it, unless I decide to get down from my bike and go towards that smell and seek the tasty food. However, I am able to resist it and hunger spasm soon disappear. That is the easy part, but after dinner, I often have an urge to eat something sweet, and sometime I give in to it. This certainly is not good for claiming all the benefits of IF. But a small miss here and there does not spoil the overall effect of fasting and all it does is to alter your period of fasting. In this regimen, one often fails to complete all the 18 hours of fasting, but anything between 16-18 has its benefits, as the effect of fasting continues, albeit a bit less than optimal. My wife and I have benefited from this decision by weight losses and generally, a feel-good factor. As a team it is easier to continue the regime. She has found ways to postpone the time of eating by indulging in other activities. We all want to enjoy life and pleasure in enjoying food is probably the foremost. Hard earned money, if not spent on choicest food, is a bit of a dampener, especially when we have worked hard all our lives and then to be told to deprive ourselves of simple pleasures of eating. It is natural to think like that. We can't become a monk but we can surely try to "Think Like a Monk".[\[1\]](#)

Two aspects of IF are *what* and *when* we eat and the *period of fasting*. Longer we give our bodies a rest from eating (digesting food) the better it is, giving long enough time to our bodies to cleanse and self-repair.

Sugar is the culprit (fructose to be more specific). Mike Henson describes it beautifully in this Y-tube video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1ZOExtsD0RM> He goes on to say, "*So, if you want to slow this process down (aging), the simple answer is to reduce sugar intake, especially when it comes to fructose. Generally speaking, processed foods have the most added sugar, and the most added sugar is fructose. The worst culprits are candy, pies, cookies, pastries, cakes, doughnuts, ice cream, sugar-sweetened drinks like soda, juice, and any syrup, including lattes. But there are also many "hidden" added sugar in things like cereal, yogurt, salad dressings, and other condiments like ketchup and BBQ sauce.*"

After sugars, rice and wheat (carbs) are basic ingredients in our diets and we have been brought up on foods containing it. We cannot totally eliminate it but an effort to reduce it in our daily consumption is crucial for IF, especially present-day wheat and rice are highly processed and barely contain anything other than starch, rapidly breaking down into glucose in our body. It is important to remember that we take carbs in through almost anything we eat. Social eating is a problem for some, and there also one can make wise choices to select what one drinks or eat.

I have touched on many issues raised in the responses and please feel free to discuss further is required.

A growing body of research suggests that the timing of the fast is the key, and can make IF a more realistic, sustainable, and effective approach for weight loss, as well as in prevention/control of many chronic diseases. Dr Jason Fung in the Obesity Code[\[2\]](#), successfully combines plenty of research, his clinical experience, and sensible nutritional advice, especially the market pressures, forcing us to eat unhealthy food. He is very clear that we should eat more fruits and veggies, fiber, healthy protein, and fats, and avoid sugar, refined grains, processed foods, and stop snacking.

There are a **few different approaches**, but the two most popular are **18/16:6/8**, which calls for squeezing all the day's meals into a six to eight-hour window and fasting for the remaining 16-18 hours, and 5:2, where five days of the week are spent eating normally and two are spent **fasting**. The first method is by far the easier to follow. We all sleep 7-8 hours. We only have to delay/skip breakfast, and to eat early in the evening to enable sixteen hours or more of fasting period. Let the body burn fat between meals. Physical activity by being active throughout the day and building muscle tone are essential, especially among the elderly. Avoid snacking all the time. Between meals, as long as we don't snack, our insulin levels will go down and our fat cells can then release their stored sugar, to be used as energy. The entire idea of IF is to allow the insulin release levels to go down far enough and for long enough that we burn off our excess fat.

The internet and Y-tube is full of very useful tips to enable fasting and its benefits. I have mentioned some of them in my earlier postings on IF. Any discussions on the subject are welcomed.

**References:**

- [\[1\]](#) Jay Shetty. Think Like a Monk. 2020. Simon & Schuster Paperbacks. New York.
- [\[2\]](#) Jason Fung. The Obesity Code. Greystone Books, 2016.