

24 Hour Fasting, Part II: What is Intermittent Fasting?

What is intermittent fasting, and is it a fad diet? Further, can anyone do intermittent fasting and is safe? What does the eating regimen include? In this segment, we will explore these questions.

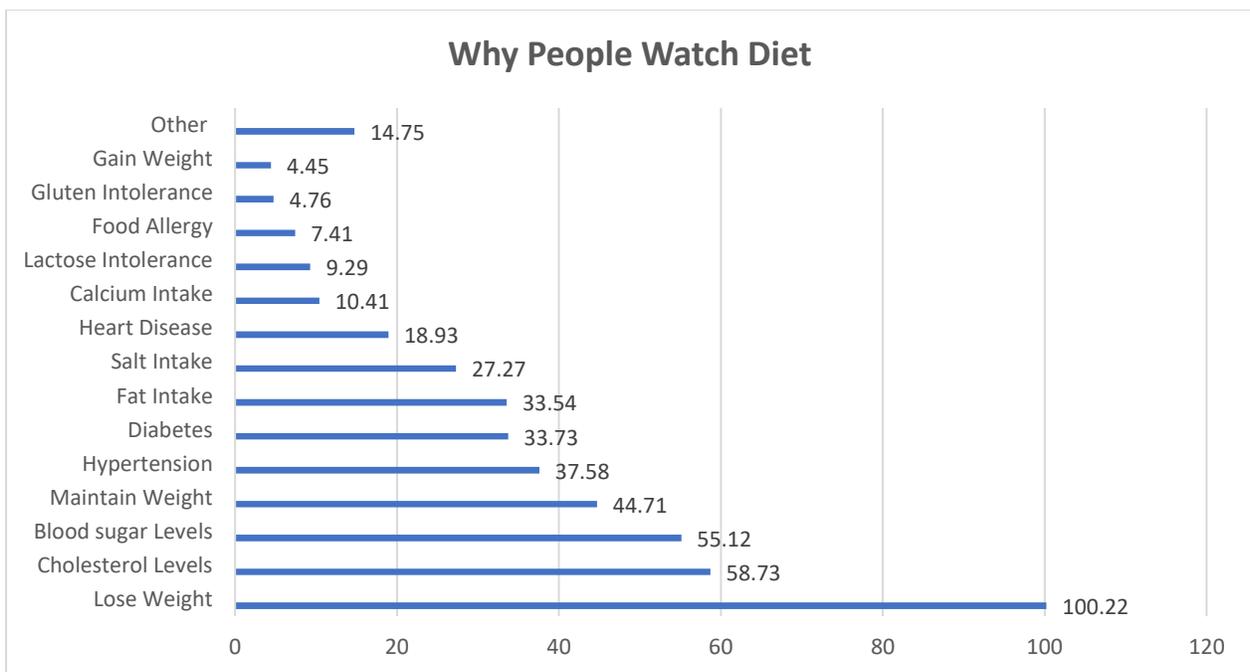
What is Intermittent Fasting?

Intermittent fasting consists of whole day fasting, alternate-day fasting, and time-restricted eating windows. Each of them cycles through periods of regular eating, fasting, and regulated eating.

In Part I of the series, we mentioned that the whole day fast involves the **eat-stop-eat method** where you fast for 1-2 days a week. Alternate-day fasting involves the **every-other-day-fasting method** and the **5:2 method**. Time-restricted eating consists of the **16:8 plan** and the **20/4 method**, commonly known as the **Warrior Diet**.

Isn't Intermittent Fasting Another Fad Diet?

Many say intermittent fasting is a lifestyle because it doesn't restrict what you eat, but rather changes your relationship with food. It forces you to reconsider eating patterns. Fasting and dieting do, however, follow a similar path in why people want to watch what they eat.



Source: [U.S. Census Data: Simmons National Consumer Survey](#)

The problem with fad diets is that the weight usually piles back on once the diet is over, most likely because of nutritional deficiencies in the diet itself. The other issue is what we choose to eat. More than 90-percent of Americans eat more sodium than is recommended, consuming an average of 3,400 mg/day of sodium (the daily guideline is 2,300 mg or less).

The [Department of Health](#) says that over 80-percent of fad dieters are looking to reduce their salt and sugar intake, and just as many are looking for help in eating smaller portions.

This is where intermittent fasting comes in. It doesn't deprive you of food or nutrients, and fasting can become a life-long practice that promotes healthier eating habits with more well-balanced meals; it also teaches food discipline.

Is Intermittent Fasting Safe for Anyone?

Intermittent fasting can lead to feelings of hunger, lightheadedness, and overeating after fasting. Hence, the plan may not be suitable for people with the following conditions:

- Diabetes
- Blood sugar regulation
- Low blood pressure
- Underweight individuals
- Eating disorders
- Amenorrhea
- Pregnant and/or breastfeeding
- Chronic fatigue
- Hormonal imbalance

The 16/8 Intermittent Fasting Meal Plan

The 16/8 method involves restricting eating to 8 hours. For example, you **eat from noon-8 pm and fast for the next 16 hours**. Another example is to stop eating at 9 pm and start again at 1 pm the following day. Coffee, tea, and water are allowed during fasting hours.

Meal options can be customized to your preference, so use the following as a guide. These are some examples of what three meals look like in a typical day:

Meal 1: chicken salad OR salmon salad

Snack: yogurt OR fruit

Meal 3: chicken and rice OR chicken tortilla soup

The 5:2 Intermittent Fasting Meal Plan

With this method, you eat 400-600 calories on **two non-consecutive days** and eat normally the rest of the week. Because these are low-calorie days, you may experience fatigue because of the limited number of calories.

Breakfast: yogurt and nuts OR eggs with a vegetable

Lunch: soup OR potatoes with greens

Dinner: noodles and chicken with vegetables OR quinoa and a vegetable

The Warrior Diet or 20/4 Intermittent Fasting Meal Plan

The 20/4 or Warrior Diet consists of eating for 4 hours and fasting for 20. It will take discipline because you'll need to compact the most densely-nutritious meals in a short window.

Some of the foods you can eat on this plan include:

- Eggs, yogurt, cottage cheese
- Pasta, barley, oats, quinoa, beans
- Potatoes, corn, carrots, greens, cauliflower, zucchini, sprouts
- Vegetable juice, water, tea, coffee, broth
- Chicken, turkey, fish, beef (lean meats only)
- Apples, mangoes, kiwi, bananas, peaches

The **foods you should avoid** are:

- Fast foods and fried foods
- Processed meats like bacon and lunch meat
- Refined carbohydrates
- Candy, cookies, cakes, chips, crackers, and canned fruits
- Artificial sweeteners
- Sweet drinks like fruit juice and soda

Whole Day and Every Other Day Fasting

Twenty-four-hour fasting doesn't require menus, but you should eat a healthy, well-balanced meal when your fast is completed. You can fashion meals around the other sample menus mentioned or create your own.

Critics Still Sound the Alarm

Multiple scientists believe that there [aren't enough high-quality human studies](#) to prove the benefits of intermittent fasting. Other experts warn that intermittent fasting is still a fad and that the effects still need to be studied to determine if it's beneficial. [Alisa Scherban](#), a Yale Health Nutritionist, put it best when she said, "Any diet must be sustainable. The best diets are those a patient can maintain. People are often looking for this one magical something that is going to work, and the point is, there's no one right diet for everyone."

However, proponents believe intermittent fasting doesn't refute the fundamentals of a healthy diet. You should still eat a wide variety of wholesome fresh foods, in portion-controlled quantities, and with less saturated fats and processed foods. They believe this, along with daily exercise, will be highly beneficial in comparison to the meals many Americans eat today.