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# Can intermittent fasting help me lose weight?

**Q** My friends tell me that intermittent fasting is a popular weight loss method these days. What do I need to know before trying it?

**A** Intermittent fasting is an eating pattern that cycles between periods of fasting and eating.

## What are the benefits?

Fasting is not a new concept. We already practise overnight fasting while we sleep.

Intermittent fasting aims to prolong the fasting period to further reduce calorie intake and facilitate weight loss, which has various health benefits.

For overweight or obese individuals, a 5 to 10 per cent weight loss could contribute to improvements in blood pressure, type 2 diabetes control, mental health, as well as improvements in menstrual irregularity and fertility.

## What are intermittent fasting methods?

There are many different patterns of intermittent fasting. Some of the more common ones are:

- 16:8 method (16 hours of fasting and eight hours of normal eating);
- Fasting for 24 hours once or twice a week; and
- 5:2 method (five days of normal eating and two days of a calorie-restricted diet of 500 to 600kcal per day).

## What are the pros and cons of skipping breakfast?

The act of skipping breakfast has gained interest as it prolongs overnight fasting and provides a “quick fix” for calorie reduction.



If you skip certain meals, ensure the other meals in your day are packed full of nutritious options.

PHOTO: ISTOCK

While skipping breakfast can help to reduce your overall calorie intake, it is important to pay attention to what you eat for the rest of the day.

For some people, breakfast is one of the easiest meals to consume nutritious food.

But if skipping breakfast means compromising on nutrition, you may need to look into optimising your choices at lunch and dinner.

## What should I consider before I start intermittent fasting?

At this time, there isn't enough data to determine the optimal fasting regime, such as the length of fasting interval and number of fasting days.

However, here are some things you may want to consider:

### ■ How sustainable is this for me?

Studies have shown that some negative side effects of intermittent fasting include hunger, low energy, moodiness and feeling irritable.

If this sounds like something that you have experienced, you could try a different pattern of

fasting or take a break before trying it again.

### ■ Is intermittent fasting healthy for me in the long run?

It can be hard to get the right amount of nutrients due to the limitation in the time frame for eating.

This issue should not be neglected because getting adequate amounts of vitamins and minerals aid in slowing the ageing process and can reduce the risk of certain cancers.

Make sure that the other meals in your day are packed full of nutritious options.

### ■ What fasting pattern will fit my lifestyle?

Consider how active you are or if you work shifts. This can help you decide which intermittent fasting pattern would work best for you.

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