

In A Bite with Charlotte Mei

Q&A - Intermittent fasting

Full Transcript

CHARLOTTE: It's been a couple of days since the release of the episode on intermittent fasting, and I gotta say I loved hearing all your comments on it. Many of you who practice it were very excited about sharing how long you've been doing it for, what your fasting schedules look like, and what it has been like for you. Now whatever it is, just a reminder that this isn't a competition on who can fast for a longer period of time okay! So do what works for you.

These comments were mostly positive - which is great to hear - but I'm also curious to know if any of you tried it and felt hmm maybe this isn't for me. So if you have any thoughts on this, feel free to drop me a DM on Instagram or a message via email - I'd love to have a conversation about that too!

For the time being, I received some great questions on certain aspects of intermittent fasting, and I've chosen three of them to focus on.

So starting with the first question: are there any specific foods to eat or avoid during intermittent fasting?

Now, the quick answer is no. And that's the beauty of it!

The idea of intermittent fasting is that there's nothing to change about your normal diet aside from the hours that you're eating. There is no restriction to the type of food that you eat. That said, as mentioned in the main episode, follow a wholefoods approach and be sure to consume foods high in nutrients to meet your body's needs. So make sure that each meal is filled with a balanced amount of protein, complex carbohydrates, good fats, and fibre.

I want to highlight protein consumption, especially if you are exercising regularly and want to maintain muscle mass. And not to mention, the consumption of protein and fibre keeps you fuller for longer.

Second question: will intermittent fasting slow down my metabolism? And how does the body tell the difference between being in fasting mode and starvation mode?

I think this is a great question! Because yes it is true that your body will compensate when it notices it's not getting enough fuel. And when this happens, your body starts preserving its stores - I mean, homeostasis 101 right? It's our body's way of regulating and surviving. But thing is, starvation mode and metabolic compensation would only kick in after about 48 and 72 hours of fasting. So intermittent fasting, which is usually between 12-20 hours

of fasting, won't take you to that length of prolonged fasting. That said, this was all shown in short-term research trials and it's yet to be confirmed through long term trials.

And just another note on metabolism, if you're practicing intermittent fasting and restricting your food intake during your eating window... for example consuming less than 1200-1300 calories a day, your body could go into starvation mode and your hormonal systems may be compromised, so be very careful about this. If you're trying to lose weight this way, it won't be a very healthy way to do so and could be detrimental to your overall health.

You'll probably hear me say this a gajillion times, but there is truly no shortcut to weight loss, and please do it in a safe manner through balanced eating, regular exercising, and good sleep hygiene. And do consult a medical professional too, not Google okay!

And now the final question, I really liked this one because I too have been exploring it a fair bit during my research. I just didn't want to go into too much detail in the first episode so as not to bombard you with too much information, but hey since someone asked this, I will gladly oblige!

So this listener asks: Is there a difference in the effects of intermittent fasting on people of different genders?

Spoiler alert: the jury is still out on this one as there is no consistent data to support any results on this.

That said, when it comes to people who menstruate, it could be helpful to keep in mind when you are in your cycle. So, here's a refresher for those of you that need it.

The 4 phases of the menstrual cycle are menstruation, the follicular phase, ovulation and the luteal phase.

So, the menstruation phase is when your period first begins, and this lasts about 4-7 days on average.

The follicular phase also starts on the first day of your period (so there is some kind of an overlap with the menstrual phase) and it ends when you ovulate. This follicular phase lasts for about an average of 16 days.

Then, ovulation happens around the middle of your cycle, so that would be day 14 if you have a 28 day cycle.

Then we go into the luteal phase which can last from 11 to 17 days. And this, my friends, is where one would experience PMS - premenstrual syndrome. What also happens here, is an increase in our metabolic rate, and we burn more calories in this part of our cycle. And

hence, again homeostasis 101... Our body adjusts for changes, and we experience increased hunger and increased food intake.

So honey, don't blame yourself when you're feeling hungrier right before your period. It's completely normal! Our body's energy needs naturally increase, and this is an increase of about 300 calories compared to the usual. So do keep in mind that you may want to change your fasting schedule if you're in this phase.

As mentioned in the previous episode, it's also in and around this period that I find not being able to fast for as long as I usually do. I end up feeling hungry much sooner and hence break my fast earlier. And it's completely fine.

And also, since we're on this note, if you're prone to heavy periods or are low in iron, do prioritise getting iron-rich foods in our diet at this time. This would include foods like red meat, spinach, beans, lentils, dried apricots. And if you pair them with vitamin C rich foods, it will aid in the absorption of iron.

To put it simply, we don't have enough evidence to claim that people of different genders experience intermittent fasting differently. So listen to your body and don't aim to fast the same way anyone else you know does. You do you!!

And there you go! I thought these questions were fab, so thank you for sending them in, and keep them coming for each episode! I love these because beyond answering your questions, I actually get to share additional nuggets of nutrition information here and there. And I hope they're helpful for you too!

And of course if you want more of such information, sign up to my weekly newsletter In A Bite by heading to my website thecharlottemei.com!

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