TH TOP HEALTH®
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While most diets dictate what to eat, intermittent fasting dictates when to eat. Intermittent fasting is cycling between hours when you eat and hours when you fast (refrain from food). The most common pattern is to fast for 16 hours, but you can eat food for eight hours during an average day (the 16:8 method). Other plans include fasting for 24 hours once or twice a week (the eat-stop-eat method).

Some studies have linked intermittent fasting to weight loss, but that's not a surprise. If you don't eat for many hours, you'll eat less overall, and that calorie reduction will lead to weight loss. But weight loss is not guaranteed, especially in people who continually consume more calories than they need during the non-fasting hours.

Studies also link intermittent fasting to lower LDL (harmful) cholesterol levels and reduced inflammation. And since there are no restricted foods, it's easy to follow.

But before you consider intermittent fasting, there are some downsides to note. Since it doesn't tell you what to eat, you don't learn about nutritious food or healthy eating habits. And while some can fast intermittently long-term, others find they are hungry, dizzy, tired and grumpy when they fast, and they have to stop.

Intermittent fasting is not recommended for people with a history of eating disorders. And research results on intermittent fasting for people with type 2 diabetes are mixed. Some show lower insulin levels, but others show poor blood sugar control and the risk of hypoglycemia. Speak to your health care provider or to a dietitian before trying this eating plan to see if it's right for you.

Get Fit with HIIT

The Benefits of High-Intensity Interval Training

High-intensity interval training (HIIT) can help you get more bang for your exercise time. Practiced by elite athletes, HIIT is a beneficial approach for average exercisers. You can practice interval training by alternating short bursts (about 30 seconds) of intense activity with longer intervals (about 1 to 2 minutes) of less-intense activity.

Example: If you walk for exercise and you're in pretty good shape, you might add short bursts of jogging into your regular brisk walks. Or if you're less fit, you might alternate regular walking with periods of fast walking.

Example: You can use a stationary bike or rower for 30 seconds of cycling or rowing as fast as possible with high resistance, followed by several minutes of slower motion with low resistance.

You might typically complete 4 to 8 repetitions in 1 workout, depending on how long you exercise. The time you exercise and recover will vary based on your activity and how intensely you exercise.

Benefits include:

Burning more calories: One study compared the calories burned during 30 minutes each of HIIT, weight training, running and biking. The result: Interval exercisers burned 25% to 30% more calories compared to non-interval exercisers.

Raising your metabolic rate: HIIT can increase metabolism for hours post-workout — using fat for energy rather than carbohydrates.

Reducing disease risk: HIIT training (like any exercise) helps reduce the risk of heart disease and type 2 diabetes.

Improving your numbers: You might gain some muscle, boost your muscles' ability to use oxygen, and reduce heart rate, blood pressure and blood sugar.

Note: Get your health care provider's okay before starting HIIT.

Q: How to stop snoring?

A: Nearly everyone snores occasionally, but it can sometimes become a chronic problem. Frequent snoring should be evaluated by your health care provider, as it could signal sleep apnea. Other signs of possible obstructive **sleep apnea** include daytime sleepiness, loud snoring, breathing pauses and gasping or choking during sleep.

Lifestyle measures can help. Losing excess weight and stopping smoking can alleviate snoring. So can sleeping on your side instead of your back. Avoid drinking alcohol close to bedtime and aim to get 7 to 9 hours of sleep every 24 hours.

If you have sleep apnea, your health care provider may recommend **continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP)**, a device which involves wearing a specialized mask connected to a hose that delivers steady air pressure during sleep. A dental oral appliance that helps position your jaw, tongue and soft palate can sometimes be beneficial. Other options include treating nasal congestion and practicing upper airway exercises. Much less commonly, surgery may be advised for snoring.

— Elizabeth Smoots, MD

Stomach Pain and Stress

Your brain and your digestive system have a direct relationship. That's why almost everyone has felt butterflies in their stomach when nervous or even experienced stomach pain, nausea or other digestive problems when stressed about personal or work matters.

Of course, stress can be physical, such as barely missing getting in a car accident. And emotional stress can be related to a happy event, like a wedding. But these stressful situations aren't constant.

It is ongoing stress, often related to work or personal relationships, which can keep your brain's stress response system — the flight or fight reaction — on high alert and impact other parts of your body. Your heart beats faster and your blood pressure rises. And the flight-or-fight response also causes delayed emptying of the stomach, potentially leading to heartburn, nausea and stomach pain. What's more, worrying about your stress-caused digestive symptoms can cause even more stress and more stomach pain.

Of course, any chronic or severe stomach pain needs your health care provider's attention. But if your stomach pain is stress-driven, these self-care strategies can help soothe stress and calm related tummy ills.

- Take short breaks during the day. Practice slow breathing to dampen down your body's stress response. Inhale slowly, pushing your stomach out and then exhale slowly through your nose.
- Exercise, whether it's aerobics, a walk or doing yoga. Just 15 minutes a day can help reduce chronic stress.
- Learn to say no. Don't add to your stress level by taking on too many extra responsibilities.

Suicide Prevention

By Eric Endlich, PhD

Every 11 minutes, someone in the U.S. dies by suicide, which is one of the leading causes of death. How can we predict and prevent these tragic, seemingly unnecessary deaths?

Unfortunately, while we try to identify the personality types of people at higher risk for suicide, it is exceedingly difficult to predict the behavior of an individual person. Still, it's valuable to review the interventions that are endorsed by experts and supported by research.

Here are some key steps you can take to help someone who might be at risk for suicide:

1. Ask the person about thoughts or plans to harm themselves. Doing so does not increase the risk; in fact, it demonstrates that you care.
2. Remove access to means of self-harm, such as firearms.
3. Encourage the person to seek professional help if they haven't already. Medication and certain forms of therapy, such as **cognitive behavioral therapy** and **dialectical behavior therapy**. Free 24-hour hotlines are available, too: The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is **800-273-8255**. In case of imminent danger, call 911.
4. Consider ways you can support the person, whether it's simply offering to listen when they're upset, sending a caring note or doing practical favors for them.
5. Follow up after a crisis or hospitalization. Keep showing that you care.

Note: Due to production lead time, this issue may not reflect the current COVID-19 situation in some or all regions of the U.S. For the most up-to-date information visit **coronavirus.gov**.

The **Smart Moves Toolkit**, including this issue's printable download, **Protect Your Immunity,** is at **personalbest.com/extras/22V8tools.**

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