

Intermittent fasting – could the secret be in abstinence?

Although it is still a subject of great scientific discussion and interest, intermittent fasting has been practiced for thousands of years and encouraged by the most varied cultures and religions over the centuries.

From an evolutionary point of view, the ability to resist periods of food scarcity and prolonged fasting was crucial for the survival of our species throughout history.

However, although practiced for millions of years, it is only recently that we have come to understand its health benefits due to the growing body of scientific evidence, suggesting that fasting can be used as a strategy to improve certain biochemical and physiological parameters related to health. But will this be

the case for everyone?! Is abstinence really the secret?

It is known that fasting results in ketogenesis (a process that occurs in the liver, where after an adaptation process, most body tissues begin to use fatty acids - fat - as fuel, saving glucose - sugar - and, initiating ketogenesis).

In addition to this energy function, the ketone bodies originated in this process are responsible for avoiding the feeling of hunger, a very important factor in the weight loss process.

Literature points to the following main effects of fasting:

- Increased insulin sensitivity and consequent improvement in blood glucose control;
- Cardiovascular effects (decrease in visceral fat, lipid profile improvement, namely lower cholesterol and blood triglycerides levels);
- Assist in the modulation of intestinal microbiota;
- Reduction in the levels of oxidative stress and decreased inflammatory profile.

Intermittent Fasting Protocols

During periods of total fasting, the intake of water, teas (no sugar) or coffee is allowed. During the periods when food is allowed, what is ingested depends on each person's goals. For example, if it is used as a weight-loss strategy, there will always have to be calorie restriction, even in periods when eating is allowed. Although the type of food each person can eat is not dictated, it is recommended



that the choice it is balanced, varied and complete as possible.

- Method 16/8 (16 hours fasting with meals 8 hours apart and the most widely accepted method by science);
- Eat-Stop-Eat method (fasting 1 or 2 times a week between a meal one day and the same meal the following day);
- Method 5/2 (during 2 days of the week an intake of only 500 to 600 kcal and the remaining 5 days maintaining the usual dietary).

While intermittent fasting is undoubtedly a growing trend, it is vital to remember that it is by no means a miracle, let alone the perfect

solution for everyone. This practice is not recommended for children and adolescents, diabetics, cases of eating disorders, pregnant women and individuals suffering from chronic diseases.

Although there is sufficient evidence supporting the beneficial role of fasting to health, further human clinical trials are still needed to test the efficacy and safety of this intervention in the prevention and control of metabolic and cardiovascular diseases. However, everything indicates that the benefits of the method go beyond the tape measure.

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