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### TOOLS & GUIDES

## An FLCCC Guide to Intermittent Fasting

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### What is intermittent fasting?

Fasting, by definition, means abstaining from eating. So technically any...

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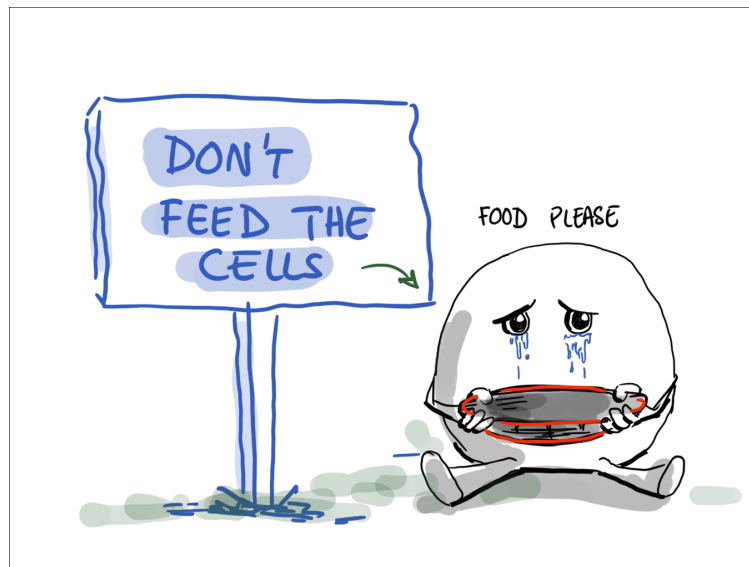
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to a short window during the day and taking in only fluids such as water, tea, or coffee for the rest of the day.

### How does intermittent fasting help with long COVID and post-vaccine syndrome?

Fasting can profoundly affect the immune system, partly by helping the body clear out damaged cells and replace them with newer, healthier cells (a process called autophagy). Fasting also improves the health of the body's mitochondria, which are known as the cell's "powerhouse".

Research suggests that autophagy may help remove the toxic and misfolded proteins created in the body from COVID infection or injection. So, anything that activates autophagy — like fasting — will be helpful with long COVID and post-vaccine symptoms.



### Can anyone do intermittent fasting?

Generally, the answer is yes, anyone can do intermittent fasting with a few exceptions. Children younger than age 18 should not fast as it impairs their growth. People who are malnourished or underweight (BMI < 20), or who are pregnant or breastfeeding, should also not try intermittent fasting. If you have diabetes, gout, or serious underlying medical conditions, you should consult your primary care physician before trying to fast, as changes in your medications and close monitoring may be required.

### Can I take medicines while doing intermittent fasting?

Some medications are also contraindicated with intermittent fasting. For example, proton pump inhibitors (PPI), which reduce stomach acid, should be avoided as they block autophagy. Suddenly discontinuing a PPI can cause rebound esophagitis, so an H2-blocker like famotidine or ranitidine may be an alternative. An aloe vera stomach formula or diluted apple cider vinegar have been suggested as alternatives to a PPI; however, there is limited data to support these interventions (plus, diluted apple cider vinegar tastes awful!)

Hydroxychloroquine (HCQ), which is recommended in some COVID-19

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Generally, it is fine to continue taking vitamins and supplements while fasting and these do not break your fast.

**Is intermittent fasting OK for cancer patients?**

While autophagy may prevent cancers from occurring in the first place, once cells have begun malignant transformation autophagy may promote their growth. Cancer cells have an increased metabolic demand for energy and macromolecular building blocks in order to proliferate, and they have shown elevated levels of autophagy to recycle nutrients. Therefore, patients with cancer should use caution in activating autophagy (fasting) and should discuss fasting and fasting protocols with their treating oncologist.

**How do I get started with intermittent fasting?**

A range of intermittent fasting plans can be adapted and modified to best suit your lifestyle. Get started slowly by allowing a 12-hour eating window 5 days a week. Gradually (week by week) reduce your eating window to 8 hours and increase the number of days you fast to 7 days a week. This eating window can be shortened to as few as 4 hours or less over time. Many people intersperse timed fasting with full-day or two-day fasts.

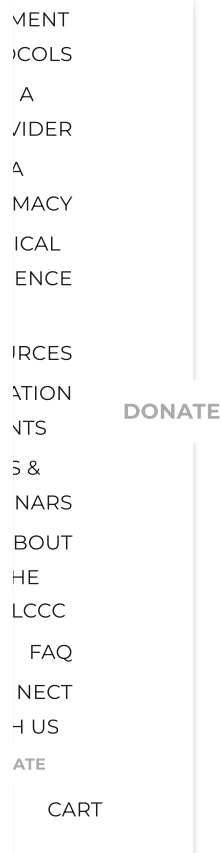
Another approach to intermittent fasting involves caloric fasting, whereby you can eat normally for 5 days and fast for 2 days by restricting caloric intake on those days to 500-1000 calories per day.

**What should I eat when I break my fast?**

It goes without saying that you should focus on a diet made up of "real food," and minimize your intake of processed and junk foods, sugar, fructose, and omega-6 polyunsaturated fatty acids. A low-carbohydrate, high-fat (LCHF) diet (such as Keto) is preferred.

**Can I drink water, coffee or tea and stay on my fast?**

Yes! It is important to stay well-hydrated during fasting periods. Be sure to drink lots of water and/or an electrolyte solution. In his book "[The Complete Guide to Fasting](#)," Dr. Jason Fung recommends drinking coffee



### Can women fast?

Several studies have suggested that intermittent fasting may not be as beneficial for pre-menopausal women as it is for men. This is likely because calorie restriction in females is associated with changes in the release of certain hormones that may impact the menstrual cycle.

There are many anecdotal stories of women who have experienced changes to their menstrual cycles after starting intermittent fasting (likely alternate-day or fasting > 24 hours). For this reason, pre-menopausal women may need to follow a modified approach.

To reduce any adverse effects on the menstrual cycle, women should take a mild approach to fasting: shorter fasts and fewer fasting days. We would suggest beginning a program of time-restricted eating consisting of fasting for 12 hours for two to three days a week and increasing from there. Furthermore, the fasting window should begin at least 4 hours before going to sleep.

Fasting days should be nonconsecutive and spaced evenly across the week (for example, Monday, Wednesday, and Friday). With time, the fasting window can slowly be increased to 16 hours and the number of fasting days per week increased.

Some women suggest linking the cycle of intermittent fasting to the menstrual cycle; namely, a 16-hour fasting window from day 1 to day 10 (including Keto), a 12-hour fasting window on days 11-16 (with Keto), and a “normal” dietary pattern on days 17-28 (including more carbohydrates with a less strict Keto diet). There are, however, no published data to support this. If you decide to follow this pared-down intermittent fasting approach, you may want to consider adding supplements like resveratrol or spermidine to boost autophagy.

### How can I learn more about intermittent fasting?

- Read Dr. Jason Fung’s book “[The Complete Guide to Fasting](#)”.
- Browse our intermittent fasting infographics

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