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Riordan Clinic is a world-renowned, academic medical center that has led the world in integrative oncology and complex chronic illness care since 1975. The Riordan Clinic was established as a 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization with missions in research, provider education, and patient education. The Health Hunter Newsletter has been published since 1986 as an educational resource to providers and patients.

Intermittent Fasting: Is it Healthy? Does it Work? Is it Dangerous?



AUTHOR

Dr. Jeremy Webster,

Obesity is a big problem today. The CDC estimates the adult obesity rate in the United States to be around 35%, and that number is growing at a shocking rate. If we don't make changes soon, that number could exceed 50% early next decade! With that obesity comes many health problems such as diabetes, heart disease, joint pain and inflammation, cancer, and other chronic diseases. Obesity is not just a cosmetic problem, it's a serious health problem.

With problems come solutions, often many solutions. Some of which work and others that might not work. Over the years the "experts" have offered many diets that promise a quick fix to the obesity dilemma. Low calorie, low fat, low carbohydrate, paleo, vegan, carnivore and Mediterranean diets have all claimed to be the secret to a healthier, leaner and hopefully better life. But many of these plans have failed to produce long-lasting and consistent results.

Between about 2012 to 2016 a series of books by Dr. Michael Mosley, Kate Harrison, Dr. Jason Fung and others started to popularize another type of diet that seemed to be backed by a lot of promising science. That diet became known as Intermittent Fasting (IF). The

miracle we had all been looking for, or so it seemed.

The initial problem with intermittent fasting was defining it. Some advocate a very low-calorie diet for two days per week followed by five days of regular eating. Others suggest 3-5 days of very low-calorie consumption per month while others suggest skipping meals from time to time. The common theme being that you plan intervals where you avoid or restrict food consumption followed by times of normal food consumption.

Commonly reported benefits of all types of IF seem to include weight-loss, improved insulin sensitivity and better blood sugar control along with a newly introduced term to the common lexicon: autophagy. It seems that nutritionists, trainers, doctors and other experts can no longer discuss diet at any length without throwing out the term "autophagy" to strengthen their stances on diet. "Keto stimulates autophagy." "Autophagy is enhanced by Time-Restricted Feeding." "Intermittent fasting is great way to boost autophagy." But what is autophagy? And is it really something we should seek in a diet?

Autophagy is a process we use to clear excess proteins from our bodies. Every day we build new proteins to form bones, muscles, joints, organs and other tissues. Sometimes we produce a bit too much protein in certain parts of the body and the excess protein needs to be cleared,

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otherwise it will build and form a plaque. Plaques seen in cataracts, blood vessels and the brains of Alzheimer's patients all respond positively to diets which promote autophagy. A 2018 review of cancer research by Antunes et.al found that diets promoting autophagy tend to enhance cancer treatments and reduce the negative side-effects of such treatments. While more research into autophagy-promoting diets and cancer is needed, the initial studies are promising. Overall, diets that promote autophagy, such as IF, seem to be of value for weight management and promotion of health.

What type of IF is best?

Two important factors play into assessing the worth of a diet: Is a diet sustainable? And does the diet help you achieve your goal? Both are necessary. A diet that produces fantastic results but is very difficult to perform is not a good diet because most people will not stick with it. A diet that is easy to perform but gives poor results, well that one is obviously not desirable. With these two factors in mind, the type of intermittent fasting most promoted by "experts" and most performed by diet-goers is a type known as Time Restricted Feeding (TRF). TRF is generally considered easy to perform and the latest research suggests it just might work, but only if performed correctly!

Time Restricted Feeding is a form of IF that takes place over a 24-hour period. It requires a set block of time each day designated for feeding and a block of time designated for fasting. An example would be 14:10 TRF where you fast for 14 consecutive hours followed by 10 consecutive hours where you consume your food for the day. Breakfast at 8 a.m., lunch at 12:30 p.m., and an early dinner finished at 6 p.m. would qualify as 14:10 TRF. A mid-morning or mid-afternoon snack would be allowed provided no calories from food or drink are consumed during the 14-hour fasting window from 6 p.m. to 8 a.m. This type of early TRF (eTRF) is healthy and happens to be the exact type followed by renowned fasting researcher Satchin Panda. But this is not the most performed version of TRF.

Today, the masses are performing a form of fasting called 16:8 TRF with a feeding window from noon until 8 p.m. Essentially, these fasters simply skip breakfast. This form was born from

a desire for convenience and a fundamental misunderstanding of the research on fasting. While there is nothing wrong with 16:8 TRF in its simplest form, the timing as performed by most (skipping breakfast) is in fact dangerous.

A 2015 study published in the Journal Physiology and behavior found that breakfast skippers had higher blood pressure and higher levels of stress hormones. They concluded that this might result in heart disease. A 2019 study in the Journal of the American College of Cardiology confirmed this hunch and concluded "skipping breakfast was associated with a significantly increased risk of mortality from cardiovascular disease." Further studies suggest that breakfast skipping may worsen sugar metabolism and insulin resistance, which is why short-term weight-loss does not seem to benefit from breakfast skipping versus other types of calorie restriction. Long-term weight loss is often hindered by skipping breakfast due to excess stress hormones.

With all of this in mind, it is important to get it right if you want to reap the benefits of intermittent fasting. These steps will keep it simple:

- Avoid the potential dangers by always starting your day with a good breakfast within 1-2 hours of waking. Be sure to include high quality protein, healthy fats and fiber-rich whole fruits or vegetables with breakfast.
- Continue to eat healthy whole foods throughout the day, and avoid highly processed foods. This will boost health by improving blood sugar and enhancing autophagy (cleansing of plaques) even if you do not partake in intermittent fasting.
- Consume dinner as early as possible and avoid food or calorie containing drinks after you have finished dinner. Try to limit your "feeding window" to 12 hours or less (eight to 10 hours is even better). Continue to hydrate with fresh water as you wind down the evening.

By following these steps, you will avoid any possible dangers of getting intermittent fasting wrong. You will likely notice a daily calorie reduction, and weight loss along with improvements in digestion, better sleep and an overall boost in energy and vitality.

Intermittent Fasting: An Enduring Path to Ideal Weight and Better Overall Health



AUTHOR

Ron Hunninghake, MD

While there has been much discussion about prescriptions for weight loss and better metabolic health, it is worth considering intermittent fasting as a safer and more enduring option that is associated with many progressive health benefits that are based upon improved mitochondrial functioning.

Proper guidance and perseverance is important with intermittent fasting. Though generally recognized as safe, it is best to consult with a healthcare professional before starting any fasting regimen.

Intermittent fasting - "IF" - does require proper preparation and planning. A book such as the 2023 recent release of *The Intermittent Fasting Revolution*, written by the long time IF researcher Dr. Mark P. Mattson, can be a valuable starting point. Dr. Mattson points to an outstanding array of health benefits well beyond weight loss that include a reduction in blood sugar levels, increased energy, and a general improvement in mood.

It is important to note that IF is best viewed as a long term (6-12 months) commitment. Start with an IF routine that works for you. This can be as simple as delaying your weekday breakfast by an hour or two. Read and try a few variations. When you find an IF pattern that works for you, then stick with it! In my personal experience with intermittent fasting, I have found that it is NOT just another quick "diet-fix" with rapid, but only temporary results. It can take longer than most people think to see progress. But when the weight loss comes and the energy enhancement starts to show up, IF readily evolves into an easy lifelong habit.

Intermittent fasting typically involves cycles of fasting and eating within specific time periods, which can vary based on personal needs, schedules, and other variables. The simple target of IF is to work toward an 8-hour "eating window." The rest of your 24-hour day is devoted to fasting and adequate hydration with electrolytes. There is no calorie counting or specific dietary restriction, although limiting sugar and refined flour along with a robust "whole foods" program will accelerate the benefits and speed of the loss of pounds.

If you've kept up with your Health Hunter issues this past year, you will remember that we have discussed mitochondrial health often in 2023. So, it will be of no surprise to you diligent readers that the potential impact of IF on mitochondrial functioning can result in 12 amazing health benefits on top of weight loss.

12 Benefits of Intermittent Fasting

1. Easy Caloric Restriction:

- Intermittent fasting typically involves cycles of fasting and eating within specific time periods.

- By restricting the hours during which you eat, IF often leads to a reduction in overall calorie intake. When you consume fewer calories than your body needs, it can result in weight loss.

2. Improved Insulin Sensitivity:

- Intermittent fasting can improve insulin sensitivity.
- During fasting periods, insulin levels in the bloodstream decrease, which allows cells to become more receptive to insulin when you do eat. Improved insulin sensitivity may help regulate blood sugar levels and reduce the risk of type 2 diabetes.

3. Better Fat Burning:

- During fasting, the body switches from using glucose (sugar) as its primary energy source to using stored fat for energy.
- This shift in fuel utilization may promote fat loss and contribute to weight management.

4. Improved Autophagy:

- Intermittent fasting may stimulate a process called autophagy, which is the body's way of cleaning out damaged cells and regenerating new ones.
- Autophagy is thought to have various health benefits, including improved cellular function and reduced inflammation.

5. Enhanced Hormonal Regulation:

- IF can influence the secretion of various hormones involved in hunger and appetite regulation.
- Ghrelin, the hormone that stimulates hunger, may decrease during fasting, helping reduce feelings of hunger.
- Leptin, the hormone that signals fullness, may become more effective.

6. Faster Metabolic Rate:

- Contrary to the belief that fasting slows metabolism, intermittent fasting may help maintain and improve metabolic rate.
- Some studies suggest that fasting periods can help preserve lean body mass while promoting fat loss, which is important for overall metabolic health.

7. Reduced Inflammation:

- Chronic inflammation is associated with various health problems, including obesity and metabolic syndrome.

- Intermittent fasting may help reduce inflammation markers in the body.

8. Better Brain Health:

- There is emerging evidence that intermittent fasting may have neuroprotective effects and support brain health.
- It may stimulate the production of brain-derived neurotrophic factor (BDNF), a protein associated with cognitive function and mental health.

9. Reduced Blood Lipids:

- Intermittent fasting may improve lipid profiles by reducing levels of total cholesterol, LDL cholesterol, and triglycerides.
- This can contribute to better cardiovascular health.

10. Cellular Stress Resistance:

- Fasting can induce mild cellular stress, which triggers adaptive responses that enhance the body's resilience to stress.
- This phenomenon is also known as hormesis, where stress induces improved adaptivity and better functioning.

11. Increased Longevity:

- Some studies suggest that IF may result in a longer, healthier lifespan.
- This phenomenon also occurs with calorie restriction which is also a result of improved mitochondrial health and cellular function.
- Ironically, IF does not necessarily require a reduction in daily calories, though this is often a beneficial "unintended consequence."

12. Greater Sense of Well Being:

- The composite result of IF is an overall feeling of health and wellness, combined with the satisfaction of restoring one's weight to a healthier level.
- This sense of well-being is often ascribed to longer fasting intervals (such as days or week) but without the loss of muscle mass that prolonged fasting can cause.

Join me for a Lunch & Lecture on January 25 to learn more about the Riordan approach to intermittent fasting. There is more information below, as well as a link to register. My lecture will be available in-person in Wichita or virtually.



LUNCH & LECTURE

Featured Speaker: Dr. Ron Hunninghake, MD, CMO



The Riordan Roadmap to Intermittent Fasting: Master Your Metabolic Health

Thursday January 25, 2024
11:30 Lunch 12:00 Lecture

To Register scan **QR code** 
or visit riordanclinic.org/events



*In order to offset the cost of lunch donations are greatly appreciated.

Fresh Eyes on Healing: Discovering the Heart of Functional Medicine at Riordan Clinic



AUTHOR

Amber Ragland, Director of Marketing

As the newly appointed Director of Marketing at the Riordan Clinic, I embarked on this journey with a blend of anticipation and curiosity. At first, I was cautiously intrigued, I had stepped into an environment rich with history and commitment, a place where healing and health transcend traditional boundaries. It has been an enlightening journey, unveiling layers of dedication, resilience, and a unique approach to healthcare that I feel compelled to share.

Functional medicine was a revelation to me. It's a holistic approach that looks at the individual rather than just the symptoms, a concept both simple and revolutionary. This journey of discovery has been personal; it has transformed not just my understanding of health but also reshaped my daily habits. The way I think about food, sleep, exercise, and overall wellness has undergone a complete overhaul. It's like finding a new lens through which to view the world.

One of the most striking aspects of the Riordan Clinic is the palpable sense of resilience and teamwork. There's a collective spirit that permeates the halls. Whether it's a challenging case or a community event, the staff come together, bringing diverse expertise and a shared commitment to health. This unity isn't just beneficial for patient care; it creates a supportive and dynamic work environment.

Within this resilience is a deep current of kindness and friendship. I've seen staff go above and beyond not just for patients but for each other. These acts of kindness, often small and unheralded, are the glue that holds us together. They create an atmosphere where patients feel cared for not just medically, but emotionally and spiritually.

At the helm of this remarkable team is Dr. Ron. His leadership

style is a blend of inspiration and humility. He leads by example, showing a rare ability to listen and make each individual—staff or patient—feel seen and heard. His approach fosters an environment of respect and openness, crucial in a field that's constantly evolving.

Joining the Riordan Clinic, I was plunged into a steep learning curve. Every day brought new insights into functional medicine, patient care, and holistic health strategies. This rapid acquisition of knowledge was exhilarating, highlighting the ever-evolving nature of healthcare and the need to remain perpetually curious and adaptable.

My initial perceptions of the healthcare industry have been profoundly altered. Dr. Riordan's words, "Once you know, you cannot unknow, and you are forever changed," resonate deeply with me. This journey has been about unlearning and relearning, a process both humbling and empowering. It has taught me the importance of viewing health through a broader, more integrative lens.

These first months at the Riordan Clinic have been transformative. I've gained not just knowledge but a new perspective on what it means to care for health—both our patients' and our own. The clinic's approach, rooted in functional medicine, is more than a healthcare strategy; it's a way of life, one that emphasizes the interconnectedness of all aspects of health.

As I continue in my role, I am excited to share and market this vision. The stories of resilience, teamwork, and breakthroughs in patient care are not just narratives; they are testaments to the clinic's core values and its profound impact on health and wellness.

Let's celebrate our journey in functional medicine and continue to look at our work and lives through fresh, curious eyes. Together, we can continue to evolve, learn, and transform lives—including our own. I encourage each of you, my colleagues and readers, to share your stories and experiences. You can do that on our website at riordanclinic.org/patient-care/share-your-story.

Food as Medicine Still Available

The "Food as Medicine: Nourishing Your Mind, Body, and Soul" guidebook is still available for download just in time for the New Year.

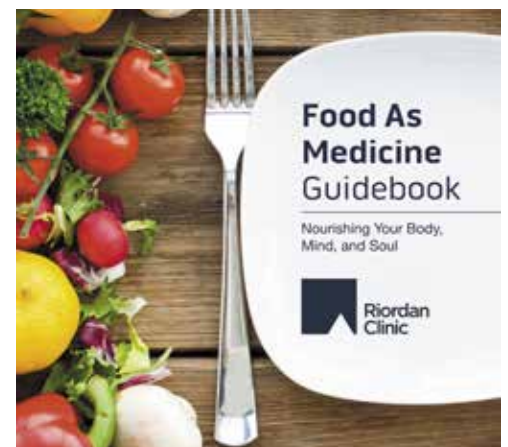
Whether you are making resolutions or simply want to make better food choices with an understanding of how food relates to overall health, this free guide is available online.

This 42-page guide covers a variety of

topics, including recommendations to get started, the relationship between food and inflammation, toxins, tips for buying organic foods and understanding labels. It also includes more than a dozen recipes for breakfast, lunch, dinner, dessert, and snacks.

Link to download:

riordanclinic.org/food-as-medicine-free-guidebook/



Riordan Clinics Celebrate Christmas with Parties

The Wichita and Overland Park staff members gathered at their clinics for holiday celebrations with family. Overland Park enjoyed a potluck lunch, while Wichita enjoyed lunch and several rounds of bingo.



Pictured above: Top row: Wichita staff enjoys a game of bingo; Dr. Stacy Dunn and husband James; Rachel and Brad Lewis show off their Christmas sweaters at the Overland Park lunch. **Middle row:** Overland Park staff; Kyla Sherley plays with Kyree, son of fellow Overland Park staff member Kaycee Rugan. **Bottom row:** Dr. Ron Hunninghake welcomes Wichita staff to lunch; Alisha Gillespie, Ashley Kirk, and Danae Baker pass through the buffet line in Wichita; staff in Wichita enjoy conversation before lunch.

Healthy Turkey Chili



INGREDIENTS

- | | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| 1 Tbsp extra virgin olive oil | 14.5 ounce can diced tomatoes in juices |
| 3 cloves minced garlic | 3 Tbsp chili powder |
| 2 medium onions, diced | 1 Tbsp ground cumin |
| 2 bell peppers, chopped | 1 Tbsp paprika |
| 2 carrots, peeled and diced | 1 tsp cayenne pepper |
| 1 medium sweet potato (optional) | 1 tsp kosher salt |
| 2 lbs. 93% lean ground turkey | 1/2 tsp ground black pepper |
| 1 1/2-2 cups of water | Pinch red pepper flakes |
| 15 oz. can tomato sauce | |

DIRECTIONS

1. Heat the oil in a Dutch oven or large soup pot over medium heat. Add garlic, onion, bell pepper, carrots, celery, and sweet potato. Sauté for 5–7 minutes until soft.
2. Add the turkey and cook until brown, 5-7 minutes. Stir often to break up chunks.
3. Add 1 ½ cups of water, tomato sauce, diced tomatoes and spices. Bring to a boil and reduce to a moderate bubble. Let cook until chili thickens, about 45 minutes, stirring occasionally. If the chili becomes too thick, add additional water.
4. Toward the end of cooking time, taste and adjust seasonings.

Servings: 16 cups of very thick chili

Note: Serve with favorite chili toppings.

Contact the Editor

Please send any comments or suggestions to newseditor@riordanclinic.org
Thank you for reading.



Melody Spurney
Editor

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IS YOUR
COFFEE
FASTING
FRIENDLY???



BULLETPROOF COFFEE IS

- Suitable For Intermittent Fasting
- Boosts Energy Levels
- Does Not Trigger Extreme Hunger
- Supports Ketone Production
- Curbs Cravings

During your fasting window, your body undergoes a natural cleaning process called autophagy. Intermittent fasting may also put your body in ketosis.

Bulletproof Coffee keeps you satisfied and full without triggering the process of digestion.

Following a high-fat, low-carbohydrate ketogenic diet during your eating window can help you reap more of the brain-supporting, fat-burning benefits of ketosis.

Real Health Podcast

Brought to you by the Riordan Clinic



The Latest Information and Top Experts
in Functional and Integrative Medicine

LATEST EPISODES



EPISODE 69

Jess Higgins Kelley, MNT, ONC, founder of the Oncology Nutrition Institute
In this episode of the Real Health Podcast, Chief Medical Officer Dr. Ron Hunninghake, MD, and Jess Higgins Kelley, MNT, ONC, founder of the Oncology Nutrition Institute, discuss the importance of hydration and its role in cancer and overall health.



EPISODE 68

Dr. Doug Thompson, D.D.S.,
FAAM, ABAAHP

In this episode of the Real Health Podcast, Chief Medical Officer Dr. Ron Hunninghake, MD, and Dr. Doug Thompson, D.D.S., FAAM, ABAAHP, discuss how dental microbiome can impact your health, including inflammation, cardiovascular, and cognitive health. How can you help yourself? You can make sure your mouth is as clean as it can be.

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