Intermittent fasting and diabetes

Many people are familiar with fasting used for religious observations like Lent or Ramadan. Now, intermittent fasting is trending for its potential health benefits; namely, weight loss. What exactly is intermittent fasting, and how can it impact diabetes management?

Intermittent fasting (IF) focuses on the timing of when to eat or not eat. When fasting, there are no food or drinks eaten. Water, coffee, or diet soda is allowed. Different plans may or may not have you restrict energy intake and can follow different cycles. Some examples are:

- Alternate-day fasting – eating usual diet one day, fasting the next
- Modified alternate-day fasting – eating usual diet one day followed by a calorie restricted diet the next day
- 2/5 – fasting 2 days per week, eating usual diet 5 days a week

Research on IF is ongoing. There is not a consensus on whether it is a good fit for most people or people with conditions like diabetes. In some studies, people with obesity who fasted lost more weight than those on low-calorie diets. In patients with diabetes, IF has been shown to lower blood pressure and improve cholesterol levels. Together, these results may lower the risk of heart disease. Another benefit of IF is that it may improve blood sugar levels, even without weight loss.
Intermittent fasting and diabetes, continued

IF is not without risks. Notably for people with diabetes, with fasting comes the risk of low blood glucose. This can be life-threatening. (1) When fasting, insulin and other medications should be monitored to prevent low blood sugar levels. There is a potential for weight regain after stopping IF, with “individuals typically regaining 70% of their lost weight.” (1) Research suggests that a pattern of weight loss and weight gain from dieting, also known as “yo-yo dieting,” increases your risk for heart disease. (2) People with diabetes who are in a healthy weight range and engage in IF may experience weight loss and weight regain. An important consideration is whether IF is a sustainable dietary pattern for the individual. Research shows that the majority of weight lost is regained when a person returns to their normal eating habits.

While IF may improve health, it is important to note that it focuses on when people eat and not what people eat. Although there are no food limits with IF, we know that quality food choices can help to prevent and manage type 2 diabetes. The American Diabetes Association (ADA) recommends eating carbohydrates that are high in fiber – for example, fruits and whole grains. Your diabetes meal plan should also include lean sources of protein like poultry, fish, or legumes. It should include healthy fats; for example, nuts, seeds, and liquid oils. Limit saturated fats such as those found in red meats and full fat dairy products. (3) The ADA states that to manage type 2 diabetes, a meal plan should have a variety of nutritious foods. This helps achieve a healthy body weight, meet blood sugar levels, and prevent diabetes complications.

Finding the healthy eating style that works for you is key to maintaining lifelong habits and keeping your weight in a healthy range. When making changes to your eating patterns like those involved with IF, consult your healthcare team. Given that there are many styles of intermittent fasting, your plan should be individualized to your daily energy and nutrient needs, weight goals, diabetes self-management, medications, and preferences. By using tips on healthy eating recommended by the American Diabetes Association, healthful changes can be made to improve quality of life.

Spring vegetable spotlight: asparagus

Asparagus is a perennial plant, meaning that it lives two years or more. In Georgia, asparagus is usually harvested from April through June. The young, pointy shoots are harvested while tender and sold in bundles. It tends to be a higher priced vegetable because of the short growing season with an average retail price of about $3 per pound according to the USDA.

Nutrition information: Asparagus is made up of about 93% water. It is considered a non-starchy vegetable, so you can feel good about piling it onto your plate. It is a good source of vitamin C, iron, and dietary fiber. Preparation: It can be prepared many ways. The bottom, woody part of the spear should be removed prior to cooking. The spear can then be left intact or sliced into smaller pieces. Popular cooking methods are sautéing, poaching, or grilling. If you have a bountiful harvest or get a great deal on fresh asparagus, it can be canned in a dial gauge pressure canner.

In addition to fresh asparagus, you can find it in a few other forms at the grocery store. Canned and frozen asparagus spears make this fresh spring vegetable accessible year round. Pickled asparagus is a popular addition to appetizers and crudité plates.

If you enjoy fresh green beans, crunchy broccoli, or bamboo shoots, asparagus may be a new seasonal favorite.
The absence of sunlight drives the production of melatonin, which helps us sleep. In this way, exposure to sunlight is an important regulator of circadian rhythm.

**Risks of sun exposure.** Acute heat related illnesses include heat stress, heat exhaustion, and heat stroke. Exposure to ultra violet light is also a risk factor for various types of skin cancer. We can't control the strength of the sun, but we can reduce our exposure to sunlight by wearing protective clothing and sunscreen. We can also help our body respond to heat and sun exposure by staying hydrated.

A person's fluid needs vary based on their age, gender, activity level, sun exposure, and the climate they live in. Medical conditions may increase or decrease fluid needs. Our total water intake is made up of water we drink, other beverages (including juices, milks, coffee, and tea), and water from foods (like fresh fruits and veggies, soups, smoothies, or popsicles). Caffeinated drinks contribute to hydration similar to non-caffeinated drinks and count towards total water intake. It is recommended to limit caffeine intake to less than 400mg/day. Water from foods contributes about 20% of our total fluid intake. Make sure you're getting a head start hydrating in the heat and sun by making half your plate fruits and vegetables. Smoothies, chilled soups, and homemade popsicles are a refreshing way to keep cool and hydrated.

Besides being nourished and hydrated, limit your sun exposure by wearing protective clothing and sunscreen. Sunscreen should be water resistant, 15 SPF or higher, and reapplied at least every two hours. Protective clothing should be dry and loose fitting for the best protection. High tech fabrics are available to offer additional sun protection. Top your head with a wide brimmed hat made of tightly woven fabric, such as canvas. Don’t forget your eyes; top your outfit off with a pair of UV protective sunglasses.
Slice eggs in half and remove three of the yolks. Place the remaining three yolks and six whites into a medium sized bowl. Mash with a fork to combine.

Add remaining ingredients and stir gently to combine.

Store in refrigerator in a covered container.

Recipe corner: easy egg salad

Serving size: 1/3 cup
Servings: 6

Ingredients:
6 hard cooked eggs, peeled
1/4 cup light mayonnaise
1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
1 celery rib, diced
1/4 teaspoon black pepper

Optional add-ins: 1/4 cup diced olives or capers, 1/2 an avocado, diced, handful of fresh herbs like dill or tarragon

1. Slice eggs in half and remove three of the yolks. Place the remaining three yolks and six whites into a medium sized bowl. Mash with a fork to combine.
2. Add remaining ingredients and stir gently to combine.
3. Store in refrigerator in a covered container.

Nutrition information (per 1/3 cup): 70 calories, 4.5g fat, 1 saturated fat, 90mg cholesterol, 150mg sodium, 2g carbohydrate, 5g protein.

Recipe source: adapted from Diabetes Food Hub www.diabetesfoodhub.org
References for Diabetes Life Lines Volume 37 Issue 1


Dear Friend,

Diabetes Life Lines is a quarterly publication sent to you by your local county Extension Agent.

It is written by an Extension Nutrition and Health Specialist and other health professionals from the University of Georgia. This newsletter brings you timely information on diabetes self-management, nutritious recipes, and news about important diabetes-related events.

If you would like more information, please contact your local county Extension Office.

Yours Truly,

County Extension Agent

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