

Part 3, Chapter 23: Systematic Fasting

At the start from “The Miracle of Fasting Proven Throughout History for Physical, Mental, an Spiritual Rejuvenation” by Dr. Paul and Dr. Patricia Bragg:

Fasting is an effective and safe method of detoxifying the body—a technique that wise men have used for centuries to heal the sick. Fast regularly and help the body heal itself and stay well. Give all of your organs a rest. Fasting can help reverse the aging process, and if we use it correctly, we will live longer, happier lives. Just three days a month will do it. [Most of Dr. Bragg’s material says 1 day a week.] Each time you complete a fast, you will feel better. Your body will have a chance to heal and rebuild its immune system by regular fasting. You can fight off illness and the degenerative diseases so common in this chemically polluted environment we live in. When you feel a cold or any illness coming on, or are just depressed—it’s best to fast!—James Balch, M.D., Coauthor Prescription for Nutritional Healing^{1}

So begins Dr. Bragg’s book on fasting, one of the most ancient health practices around. In this country where **over indulgence** and excess is the norm, the idea of fasting—drinking only purified, preferably distilled water—is tantamount to draconian. Still, it’s not nearly as difficult, or extreme, as one might think. To be sure, we generally fast automatically between dinner and the next morning. On an intermittent fast, discussed in chapter 14, the nightly fast is carried forward a few more hours and then restarted earlier the next afternoon. It’s not an appreciable stretch to extend a fast to 24 hours, ostensibly 36 with going into the next sleep cycle. Let me be clear on this one point:

Our bodies have a natural self-cleansing [capacity] for maintaining a clean, healthy body and our “river of life”—our blood. It’s essential we keep our entire body from head to toes healthy and in good working order so nothing breaks down!^{2}

When I first got into Dr. Bragg’s health protocol, fasting seemed a bit extreme. I’ve engaged in such a practice often enough, including one 10 day fast many years ago, but it hasn’t been a common practice for a while. I had mostly considered fasting a religious practice, and it is in many circles. Still, at this point, I consider it far more a vacation for the body—a period of incredible rest. A lot of pretty amazing things happen on a fast.

Some people eat as though they were going to do the hardest kind of physical labor! A sedentary person—by habit and conditioning—will get up in the morning and eat a heavy breakfast of cooked or dry cereal, hot cakes with bacon, eggs, buttered toast and a stimulating beverage like China tea, coffee or mucus-forming milk. Wild animals never drink milk after they are weaned ... We do not approve of milk drinking—neither raw nor pasteurized. It is amazing how you will have less mucus, runny noses, colds, postnasal drip, etc., once you cut milk and its products from your diet. A daily [food] journal will show proof of changes happening to your human machine!^{3}

By relieving the body of the work of digesting foods, fasting allows the system to rid itself of toxins, while facilitating healing. Fasting regularly gives your organs a rest and helps reverse the aging process for a longer and healthier life.—James F. Balch, M.D. Co-Author

Prescription for Nutritional Healing.^{4}

There are a huge number of benefits from fasting, drinking only distilled water. The following is a list of the more obvious benefits of fasting. It's an extensive list. As is obvious, a fast is tremendously helpful to your health and well being. Consider fasting the ultimate in health care—and the price for this 'insurance policy' can't be beat.

- Fasting renews your faith in yourself, your strength and God's strength.
- Fasting is easier than any diet.
- Fasting is the quickest way to lose weight.
- Fasting is adaptable to a busy life.
- Fasting gives the body a physiological rest.
- Fasting is used successfully in the treatment of many physical illnesses.
- Fasting can yield weight losses of up to 10 pounds or more in the first week.
- Fasting lowers and normalizes cholesterol, homocysteine and blood pressure levels.
- Fasting improves dietary habits.
- Fasting increases pleasure eating healthy foods.
- Fasting is a calming experience, often relieving tension and insomnia.
- Fasting frequently induces feelings of euphoria, a natural high.
- Fasting is a miracle rejuvenator, slowing the aging process.
- Fasting is a natural stimulant to rejuvenate the growth hormone levels.
- Fasting is an energizer, not a debilitator.
- Fasting aids the elimination process.
- Fasting often results in a more vigorous marital relationship.
- Fasting can eliminate smoking, drug and drinking addictions.
- Fasting is a regulator, educating the body to consume food only as needed.
- Fasting saves time spent marketing, preparing and eating.
- Fasting rids the body of toxins, giving it an internal shower and cleansing.
- Fasting does not deprive the body of essential nutrients.
- Fasting can be used to uncover the sources of food allergies.
- Fasting is used effectively in schizophrenia treatment and other mental illnesses.
- Fasting under proper supervision can be tolerated easily up to four weeks.
- Fasting does not accumulate appetite; hunger pangs disappear in 1-2 days.
- Fasting is routine for most of the animal kingdom.
- Fasting has been a common practice since the beginning of man's existence.
- Fasting is a rite in all religions; the Bible alone has 74 references to fasting.
- Fasting under proper conditions is absolutely safe.
- Fasting is a blessing.^{5}



In this section I'll cover the core protocol for fasting. It's not an appreciably difficult practice but it does need to be executed with discipline and awareness. Too, when living on a diet that is 90%-95% vegan, switching into a fasting state is almost automatic, or at least intuitive.

My discussion in this section will be limited to a 24-36 hour and 3 day fast. The reader is advised to consult Dr. Bragg's book on fasting if a longer fast is being considered. Moreover, extended fasts get into a whole different world than what the scope of this book covers. This book is about becoming and staying healthy. It's not focused on the esoteric side of a vegan lifestyle nor on the spiritual journey one becomes part of on an extended fast.

The essence of a fast is to cleanse your body of accumulated poisons and to restore energy. Much energy is lost through toxic health habits. The more toxic you are the more loss of energy there will be. As Dr. Bragg so notes:

Radiant Health and a Kinder, Gentler World

Your unhealthy habits promote low vital force and fatigue! Then the poisons can't be thoroughly flushed out of the body. So they find a spot to torment you and are named according to the location of your pain. But that pain actually came from the way you live. Don't put the blame elsewhere! You have enervated yourself, and the toxic poisons from many sources of your daily living are tormenting you. Cleanse and rebuild your vital force by fasting and natural living, and fatigue will vanish! Unhealthy living is the reason why you feel burned out, fatigued, full of aches and pains, prematurely old and, maybe heading straight for the human "scrap heap"!^{6}

Fasting is not only the oldest method of fighting physical problems, but the best of all remedies because it has no side effects. Fasting is the most natural and original process of cleansing, detoxing and purifying the body.^{7}

I should clarify the above to say that there actually are 'side effects' when fasting. To be forewarned is to be forearmed. Fasting—eliminating food altogether—places the body in a focused state of detoxification. While Dr. Bragg suggests extended fast early on, I'm not sure that's such a great idea. There are many symptoms that can happen on a fast, whether short or long, and it has everything to do with how toxic you are to start with. Too, drinking pure distilled water on a fast is critical to facilitate diluting toxins as they are released. Of symptoms all of the following may be expected to varying degrees. Of particular importance is to live on a vegan diet, fruits, vegetables, nuts, seeds and sprouts, for several day before a fast—even a 24-36 hour one. The fewer recent toxins in your body the easier your fast will be.

- Cravings for food, which is simply your body going through food withdrawal.
- A headache is not uncommon.
- Fatigue, sleepiness or irritability may arise at times.
- At the same time dizziness or light headedness.
- Increased sensitivity to sounds, smells and taste.
- The tongue, in most cases, will develop a thick white or yellow fur coating, which can be scraped or brushed off.
- Lower blood pressure is often experienced. If you're on high blood pressure medications, monitor your blood pressure carefully.
- Bad breath and displeasing tastes in the mouth, especially the taste of copper or other metal.
- Foul smelling urine is possible.
- Skin odors or eruptions may appear depending on the state of toxicity. Shower daily, or more often if necessary.
- Digestive upset, mucousy stools, flatulence or even nausea and vomiting.
- Insomnia and bad dreams in some people as the body releases toxins during the night.^{8}

The above are the most common issues. The symptoms will pass. Again, to be forewarned is to be forearmed. Keep in mind that if you live on a 90%-95% vegan diet, detoxification symptoms will be minimal. As the computer input saying GIGO goes, garbage in, garbage out—and if you've been living on a standard America diet then there can be a lot of garbage that needs to come out.

Each time you fast the symptoms tend to diminish and, once back to a regular vegan-based diet, you'll start feeling better and better. Do keep in mind that if you live on a Standard American Diet symptoms will tend to repeat every time you fast. The idea is to detoxify your body and then to keep it detoxified. Fasting and then going back to a Standard American Diet is rather like taking a shower and then going and rolling in a puddle of mud. On the other hand, fasting and then living on a 90%-95% vegan diet opens up a whole new world.

Your eyes become brighter and all the natural senses of the body seem to be sharper! After a fast, your food tastes better—the fruits and the vegetables taste so mar-

velous, because of your newly revitalized taste sense! Your body seems to be tireless and you will sleep like a baby after a fast. There are so many miracle rewards from a fast that only a person who has actually fasted can truly realize the great benefits that are achieved.^{9}

The procedure for a 24 hour fast is simple. For 24 hours drink only distilled water with one minor exception. Add 1-2 teaspoons of Bragg's apple cider vinegar to water. (It can be sweetened with honey or stevia.) That's it. The apple cider vinegar facilitates the detoxification process including helping to break up mucus. Probably the easiest way to do a 24 fast is to stop eating at say 5:00 PM the previous day and then not eat again until after 5:00 PM the next day. Ideally, just keep going until the next morning which will make it a 36 hour fast. I can speak from personal experience that when you wake up the day after that, the world will a different place.

As far as a short fast goes, there's really no reason to not engage in normal activities as long as they don't create a meal conflict. For example, don't plan a 24 hour fast if you know there will be a pot luck dinner served that you need to attend. It's just common sense. Fasting is a personal matter but it works a better if you can do so unobtrusively. The best plan is to fast when it will not create social conflicts. Too, if you prepare food for others, it's a lot easier to fast if that responsibility is temporarily taken over by someone else—especially on a longer fast.

At the end of the fasting cycle, break the fast with something light that is definitely vegan. Above all else, do not have a heavy meal, as doing so can cause digestive issues. Keep in mind that your stomach has been rested and that it has to be restarted slowly. Fruit and vegetable juice is a great way to start 'eating' again.

The procedure for a longer fast is the same as for a short fast except that it requires more extensive planning. Depending on your diet before the extended fast will have much to do with the issues that will develop during the fast.

One notable difference between a 24-36 hour fast and a longer one is that after a couple of days your body starts living exclusively on metabolized fat (ketosis). It won't switch back to a glucose metabolism until sugar is reintroduced. It's not really a problem but it can require extra rest. The process of going from a glucose driven to a fat driven metabolism is not necessarily 100% smooth.

Too, bowel movements can become irregular. There's nothing coming in so there's little reason to expect anything to be going out. For any relatively short fast, say 3-4 days, bowel movements aren't something to be concerned about, and especially so if your living on a predominantly vegan diet on a regular basis. Of paramount importance is to drink at least 8 glasses of distilled water a day. Becoming dehydrated on a fast can create potentially serious problems including toxins being reabsorbed in the body because of insufficient water to flush them out.

The biggest issue with a longer fast is that it does require more will power. After the first 24 hours hunger pangs will essentially cease. Still, one starts having to deal with the mental challenge of habituated eating. Moreover, since you are detoxing more aggressively, it's best to limit social interaction as much as possible, and especially so if others around you are eating. It takes some practice and experience to become totally comfortable with a longer fast. The longer you fast the easier it becomes.

When coming off of a longer fast it's even more important to ease back into eating slowly. Fruit and vegetable juices are ideal as are broths. Your stomach would have shrunk and suddenly dumping a significant meal can create a lot of discomfort. Slowly easing out of the fast is the wisest protocol to follow. To be sure, while there is cause for celebration at the end of an extended fast, breaking a fast with a five course meal is definitely NOT a good idea—and doing so will create some unpleasant side effects.

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More than anything else fasting is simply an intricate part of a healthy lifestyle. Still, if you're not quite up to a water fast, or at least a long one, juice fasting, covered in the next chapter, provides a way to experience many of the benefits of a water fast while not being in a fasting state, per se.



As a final observation, and this discussion would be better put under "Breaking Bad Habits", fasting is an excellent way to break addictions to tobacco, alcohol, soft drinks, and coffee (caffeine). Dr. Bragg puts it succinctly.

Now, if a person wishes to release himself from the bondage of these irritating and poisonous drugs that act first to stimulate and then to depress the central nervous system, they must fast. The fast is a salvation for those who wish to break free of the shackles of these poisonous habits. In my years of supervising fasts, I have seen these wretched habits repeatedly defeated by fasting!^{10}

I have found from experience that this is true. I've tried breaking habits outside of fasting, but there is something almost magical about the fasting process when it comes to breaking addictions. Perhaps the biggest consideration is that—it's self evident—on a fast you don't engage in these addictions. Once you find that you're not going to die without a 'fix', fasting can go a long way on the road to staying off whatever the 'stuff' is.



I've only discussed short term fasting—four days or less. Fasting is a process that can be extended for many days, or weeks. As a general consideration, if you're really healthy and have practiced many short term fasts, it is then safe to engage in a longer fast. Fasting up to 10 days can usually be done without outside supervision. Keep in mind, however, that such a long fast is very powerful. It should NEVER be undertaken unless you're already relatively toxin free. Otherwise the detoxification process could be hell to endure. Moreover, you'll need extra rest on such a long fast and exercising probably should be suspended for the duration of the fast.

Of an even longer fast, Dr. Bragg suggests to do so only under expert supervision. That would entail working with someone well versed in long fast. An extended fast beyond ten days takes you into a very different world, physically, mentally and spiritually. You can engage in a juice fast for a very long time—Joe Cross did his now classic juice fast for 60-days—but a strict water fast (while consuming Bragg's apple cider vinegar) is a very different process. Too, as this writer has never tried a fast beyond 10 days, I'm not the person to even discuss this protocol. As such, I'll leave this discussion to others and call the scope of my knowledge on the subject exhausted at this juncture. Suffice it to say, Dr. Bragg's summary on fasting:

During fasts, when the body nears a purified state, the mind is on such a high level that the subconscious mind becomes very active and sharp. One can almost seem to experience the supernatural. Some of the greatest mental feats have been performed during a fast. You experience higher mental efficiency for long periods following the fast. Because fasting helps clear the system of toxic debris that allows the brain to be nourished by a purer blood stream so it can reach amazing heights of efficiency.

Out of a toxic body comes unrest, evil thoughts, and, conversely, a clean, purified body emits clean thoughts. The responsibility for clear thinking arises from the quality of eating along with living a healthy lifestyle.^{11}