

Juice Fasting: *Give Your Body A Rest*

Why is it that so many cultures and religions around the world participate in fasting, days and even extended periods of time during which the individual consumes nothing? As you soon will understand, the answer is clear: There are measurable physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual benefits to fasting.

Why Juice Fast?

There are many different types of fasts, ranging from the elimination of only certain types or categories of foods from the diet for a specified time, to the complete abstinence from all ingestion, including solids foods, juices, and water. While these two extremes of fasting may be indicated or contraindicated in different circumstances, for our purposes I advocate what is known as a juice fast.

In fact, I only recommend juice fasting, which is defined as avoiding all solid foods and the consumption only of vegetable and fruit juices, and water. I recommend juice fasting because it allows the body to cleanse itself by ceasing the process of breaking down foods, while simultaneously providing to the body the nutrients it needs, such as basic calories, enzymes, vitamins, and minerals.

The primary benefit of juice fasting is to give your body a chance to rest from the very taxing process of digestion. To understand why such a rest is beneficial, you must first understand how digestion works.

The process of digestion begins in the mouth. After food is ground by the teeth, the mouth is flooded with saliva from three different pairs of glands. It is during this phase that the first digestive enzyme, ptyalin, is introduced. The purpose of ptyalin is to start the process of breaking down starches into simple sugars.

Once food has been sufficiently ground and mixed with saliva, the natural physical response is to swallow. Upon swallowing, blended food moves into the esophagus, and peristalsis (a kneading movement) commences. It takes an average of three to five seconds for peristalsis to knead food sufficiently to pass it down the esophagus and into the stomach.

When food arrives in the stomach, it is kneaded further, and squeezed and mixed with gastric juices. This process takes between three to five hours, depending on the type of food that was consumed.

The process of digestion is completed in the small intestine, the 22 foot organ in which the most intensive work of digestion and absorption takes place. Here, in the small intestine, ducts call up bile from the liver and digestive juices from the pancreas, and mucus and other alkaline intestinal juices from other surrounding secreting glands, to complete the digestive process.

When digestion is complete, the valuable ingredients of the food you have consumed are distributed throughout your body, and the elements that are not necessary are sent to the parts of the body from which they are eliminated.

Obviously, this is a very condensed description of the digestive process. Nevertheless, it should give you a fair idea of how involved the process of digestion is for your body. It also should help you to understand how giving your body a rest from the process of digestion will put your body into a total elimination cycle, allowing the process of cleansing to unfold.

Just as you need a vacation from the mundane world to refresh and renew, so juice fasting gives your body the ‘vacation’ time it needs to eliminate accumulated toxins and wastes. Because the vegetable and fruit juices I recommend during a juice fast require little digestion, juice fasting, done properly, will actually get rid of dead, disfunctioning cells, while promoting the generation of lively, healthy cells.

Thus, through juice fasting, the body is given the opportunity to both cleanse and repair simultaneously.

Specific Benefits of Fasting

In many, many societies throughout the world, fasting of one kind or another is not only advocated but practiced regularly. Regardless of whether the

motivation to fast is cultural, religious, spiritual, or individual, the same benefits are experienced universally.

The specific benefits of fasting include these:

- Physical detoxification, purification, and revitalization
- Heightened sensory acuity in all five senses
- Enhanced mental clarity and creativity
- More balanced emotional response
- Intensified spiritual awareness
- Improved relaxation and sleep during rest
- Amplified energy during activity
- Desirable physical results such as weight loss (in individuals who are overnourished rather than malnourished), reduction or elimination of allergies, clearer skin, and greater longevity.

Conditions For Which Fasting May Be Beneficial

Contrary to the typical American mind set that insists that one must eat ‘three square meals a day’ in order to remain healthy, there are actually specific conditions of ill health for which fasting may be more beneficial than over-nourishment.

These conditions include but are not limited to:

- Respiratory problems such as the cold, influenza, bronchitis, and asthma
- Problems of the digestive systems such as constipation, indigestion, diarrhea

- Allergic conditions such as environmental and food allergies
- Cancer (under certain circumstances)
- Heart diseases
- Diabetes
- Other problems such as headaches, insomnia, skin conditions, hypertension, fever, fatigue, epilepsy, and mental illness

Conditions Where Fasting May Be Contraindicated

Like any health regimen or remedy you might consider, there are certain conditions where fasting is contraindicated and should not be undertaken.

These conditions include but may not be limited to:

- Pregnancy
- Nursing
- Under-nutrition, malnutrition, and underweight
- Pre- and post-surgery
- Certain heart problems such as low blood pressure, weak heart, and cardiac arrhythmias
- Certain ulcers
- HIV/AIDS
- Cancer (under certain circumstances)
- Mental illness (under certain circumstances)

If you are considering embarking on a juice fast, you are well advised to consult with a healthcare practitioner who is familiar with the types and

benefits of fasting and who can evaluate the appropriateness of a juice fast for you. If your healthcare provider agrees that there is no reason you should not give it a try, then by all means, juice fast and experience the benefits for yourself.

What To Expect From A Juice Fast

During the first few days of your juice fast, when you have made the commitment to forego all solid foods and to consume only natural fruit juices and water, your body will be triggered to survive off its own substances. Being deprived of an intake of fats and proteins, your body will use its own tissue for energy, systematically choosing old, diseased, and damaged cells first. If you have considerable stores of them, your body may actually feed itself from the collected wastes that have accumulated over the years.

It is not uncommon for various detoxification systems to commence at the onset of your fast. Typical symptoms reported in the first two or three days of a juice fast include headache, fatigue, nausea, and body odor. These symptoms are normal, they are to be expected, and they are indications that your body is cleansing itself.

After a few days, your body will switch to using stored fat as a secondary source of energy and as a way to preserve your lean muscle tissue. When this happens, huge quantities of fatty acids will collect in the liver, where they will be broken down and

utilized for energy. It is at this point that you will start to experience a noticeable feeling of 'lightness,' your energy will increase, and the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual benefits of fasting listed above will begin to present themselves.

The most significant benefit of fasting is that it will allow your body to devote itself, undistracted, to the elimination of accumulated toxins. This will occur in a variety of ways. To start, you will experience an increase in bowel movements and urine elimination. You may also exude a somewhat unpleasant body odor as the toxins escape from your skin, but this will only last for a few days.

You also may experience a stuffy nose, clogged ears, and/or a slight cough. Your lungs will be releasing the materials that have accumulated there, so you may also experience temporary bad breath. And your tongue will most likely become coated as toxins make their way out through your mouth.

After the inaguration phase of your juice fast, your body will become accustomed to its new conditions of nutrition. The benefits of fasting listed above will become more and more prominent while the unpleasant symptoms will subside (although probably not altogether). You will feel more energized, more conscious, and more healthy, and when the time comes to end your fast, you will want to retain the superior experiences you enjoyed during the fast, so you will begin to make more thoughtful, more healthful food choices.

With the exception of conditions under which fasting is absolutely contraindicated, it is my professional opinion and advice that juice fasting has the power to be beneficial for just about anyone. If you would like more specific instructions about juice fasting, I will be happy to share them with you. Feel free to email me at ellen@nutritionwithellen.com or call me at 516-897-0369. And please remember to include Greens Today® original formula as part of your healthy juice fast!

Renewal through fasting has been attained throughout history and in every corner of the world. I encourage you to try it — and to make it a regular part of your health consciousness and dietary practice — for your continued and enhanced physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being.

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