

WTNS Radio OSU Extension Update for May 18, 2020
Healthy People. Healthy Finances. Healthy Relationships.

On today's OSU Extension update for Healthy People, Healthy Finances, and Healthy Relationships we'll talk about intermittent fasting.

You've probably seen tabloid headlines with claims about how fasting can give quick weight loss results and reduce belly fat. Are these true? Is fasting healthy? This week I was able to participate in a webinar about intermittent fasting presented by Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center Registered Dietitian Liz Weinandy. She addresses these questions, and I wanted to be sure to share this timely nutrition information with you.

Fasting is certainly nothing new. People have been fasting for medical or spiritual reasons for centuries. Muslims around the world are nearing the end of their annual month-long time of fasting and prayer called Ramadan. There are also incidences in both the New and Old Testaments in the Bible when people fasted and prayed, including Jesus.

There are different kinds of fasts for nutritional reasons, and intermittent fasting has been getting a lot of attention in the past few years. Two British journalists, Mosely and Spencer wrote "The Fast Diet" in 2013. I find it interesting that Mosley studied medicine, but instead of practicing as a physician he became as science journalist and documentary maker. They popularized the "5:2" diet, which is a type of modified fast or intermittent fast. It is called 5:2 because on 5 days of the week you eat normal, healthy balanced meals. On two days of the week you reduce total calorie intake to only about 500 calories or one small meal.

Intermittent fasting could also mean establishing time restricted feeding where fasting is involved daily. In one sense, it compresses our eating schedule. Breakfast may be a little later in the morning and dinner a little earlier in the evening. Some regimens suggest fasting for up to 18 hours, but in many cases this could be dangerous. Weinandy suggests that a more manageable approach to this could be eating between 9 AM and 7 PM (fasting for 14 hours).

There are several popular claims about intermittent fasting like weight loss, protection against variety of diseases, increased longevity, and decreased inflammation. Many appear to be reasonable claims in lab animals, but the research is still coming in for human subjects.

Research does suggest that though there may not be a significant difference in weight loss compared to normal calorie restriction, there is evidence that fasting can result in the loss of more abdominal fat. This kind of visceral fat increases insulin resistance and increases the risk for heart disease, so being able to lose it is a benefit.

Individuals who might consider trying this include those with elevated cholesterol and triglyceride levels that don't respond to standard treatment methods alone. Other candidates could be those with Type 2 Diabetes who struggle to control blood sugar with standard treatment methods alone (carb counting, meal timing, exercise, medication). However, I will stress that working with a dietitian is a key factor for this population.

Weinandy points out that there are also people who should not try fasting. This includes those with a history of eating disorders or a treacherous history with dieting, adolescents as they are still in a growth period and need maximum nutrition, those with Inflexible eating or work schedules, and especially those who find that fasting increases hunger and results in cravings and desires to snack on unhealthy foods.

You can learn more about intermittent fasting at go.osu.edu/intfast.

And if you are on Facebook, be sure to check out our three Facebook pages. The page "OSU Extension Coshocton County" features updates and information about agriculture and natural resources, and healthy living topics like nutrition and finances and parenting. The "Coshocton County Master Gardener" page shares timely updates to anticipate your gardening questions, especially this time of year. And the "Ohio State – Coshocton County 4-H" page will give you lots of great ideas for engaging youth and keep you in the loop on local 4-H happenings.

Remember: Keep cooking. Keep cleaning. Keep learning. Keep living.

In closing, at OSU Extension, we are proud to work for Coshocton County to help improve our families, farms, and businesses. Please feel free to contact OSU Extension for more information at 740-622-2265 or visit our website at coshocton.osu.edu. Make it a healthy day!