

The Benefits of Fasting

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IN THIS ARTICLE YOU WILL learn about some of the tremendous benefits that can be derived from a properly conducted fast. When properly utilized, fasting is a safe and effective means of maximizing the body's self-healing capacities. The results can be truly amazing. Before going on to describe some of the many advantages of fasting, let's define it. Fasting is the complete abstinence from all substances except pure water, in an environment of total rest. Let's also keep in mind that fasting is only one part of the total health-supporting program we call Natural Hygiene.

Health results from healthful living. No matter how successful a fasting experience might be, it needs to be followed by a consistently healthy lifestyle. The requirements of health must continue to be provided, especially in the areas of diet, environment, activity and psychology.

The examples that follow are just a few of the many beneficial uses of fasting.

An aid in transition

During the past seven years I've worked with thousands of patients from all over the world who had a wide variety of disorders and health concerns. A great many of these patients required a period of supervised fasting to achieve their health goals. Virtually all of them needed to make lifestyle changes to achieve improved health. Fasting made the transition easier!

My observation is that the best motivating factor in helping people adopt healthful living practices is often the positive reinforcement that comes with feeling good and healthy.

Fasting, for as few as five days to as many as 40 days, will often dramatically shorten the time it takes for an individual to make the transition from a conventional diet and lifestyle (with all the associated addictions, pains, fatigue and disease) to the independent and energetic state associated with healthful living.

People who undertake a fast in a supervised setting, tend to achieve health more quickly than those who attempt changes without a fast. The intensive health education, plus the emotional support they receive during their stay, result in increased compliance with dietary and lifestyle recommendations.

A speedy recovery

When individuals try to make major dietary changes without the benefit of a fasting experience, they often become frustrated. The transition to a healthful eating pattern can make you feel sick. Symptoms such as fatigue, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain and bloating, joint pain, headaches, skin rashes, irritability, depression, etc. are just a few of the common problems that can arise as the body attempts to eliminate toxins, metabolic byproducts, etc., and adjust physiologically to a health promoting diet.

It is difficult to get people to practice new healthful living habits for long unless they begin to experience some benefits quickly. Changes that may take months (or even years) with careful eating may occur much more quickly if a properly supervised fast is utilized. This is an important consideration because once people begin to realize their health potential, they become a likely candidate for a lifelong commitment to healthful living.

Overcoming addictions

Addictions to drugs such as alcohol, cocaine, nicotine and caffeine are examples where fasting can dramatically reduce the often protracted withdrawal symptoms that prevent many people from becoming drug-free. Most people are surprised at how easy it is to quit smoking or drinking with the help of fasting.

Uterine fibroid tumors

Fasting can often be especially important in situations where drugs or surgery have been recommended. When uterine fibroid tumors contribute to pain and excess bleeding, a hysterectomy, removal of the uterus, is often recommended. A proper fast will often dramatically reduce the size and effect of these tumors. I have treated numerous women who have been able to successfully avoid hysterectomy using conservative methods. Ovarian cysts and cervical dysplasia also often respond favorably.

Back and neck problems

Back and neck pain are remarkably responsive to conservative care. In my institution I utilize fasting, rest and exercise, improved posture and body use, and when appropriate, chiropractic manipulation and physical therapy. It is interesting to note that often patients

with chronic pain who have received extensive treatment, including drugs, surgery and manipulation, will experience dramatic improvement through the use of fasting.

A case history

I recently treated a young man, a Natural Hygienist since birth, who had been in a severe automobile accident four years ago. He had suffered with constant neck pain and headaches since the accident. His greatest concern was his tendency to pass out unexpectedly. Apparently the dysfunction in his neck had interfered with the autonomic portion of his nervous system altering blood flow to his brain.

After a period of four weeks of care, which included a fast, followed by careful re-feeding and, in his case, spinal manipulative therapy, this individual made an excellent response. At his three month follow-up he reported complete absence of neck pain and headaches and had not felt faint or passed out since his stay at the Center.

Cardiovascular disease

Most cases of cardiovascular disease are also responsive to conservative care. In 154 consecutive cases of high blood pressure [hypertension] that I have fasted, 151 (98%) have been able to achieve and maintain normal blood pressure without the use of medications. [Complete details of this study will appear in an upcoming issue of Health Science.]

Angina and intermittent claudication are examples of conditions that will often respond rapidly to fasting. Often patients can achieve freedom from pain and medications within a few days or weeks. It is not unusual to see cholesterol levels drop as much as 100 points with diligent effort.

Gastrointestinal disorders

Disturbances of the gastrointestinal system, including esophagitis, gastritis, colitis, constipation, bloating, and the symptoms associated with so-called "candidiasis," usually respond well to conservative care.

My most recent case of gastrointestinal disturbance was a young woman with severe colitis [inflammation of the colon]. She reported severe, constant bleeding through the rectum. She said that despite continual medical treatment with cortisone, implants, and a wide range of other medication, she had bleeding with every bowel movement for eight years. Her physician had explained that surgery would have to be performed.

After we had eliminated her medications, a period of fasting was undertaken. Within a week, the constant pain was resolved. By the 10th day, the passing of blood and mucus had stopped. After two weeks of fasting we began to carefully feed her. Her bowel movements were blood-free from the first. At her three-month follow-up she reported feeling great and completely free of any significant bleeding or problems.

Diabetes

Many chronic degenerative conditions respond well to fasting and a Natural Hygiene lifestyle. Diabetes is no exception.

Working with diabetic patients is very satisfying because the consequences of the disease are so devastating and the results with conservative care are usually so dramatic. Most adult onset diabetics can be brought under control and freed from the use of insulin and other medication through the use of fasting and a carefully followed diet and lifestyle program. Such a program will allow most diabetics to achieve a high level of function and the ability to maintain normal sugar levels without medications.

There are exceptions

Not everyone is a candidate for fasting. There are a number of factors to consider before a fast is recommended. My procedure is to first review the patient's medical history and perform a comprehensive physical examination including appropriate laboratory or specialized diagnostic tests. I then review my findings with the patient and make appropriate recommendations. These may include dietary and lifestyle recommendations. These may include dietary and lifestyle changes, exercise programs, etc., and, when indicated, fasting. When fasting is indicated, patients stay at my institution.

Not every individual or every condition will respond to conservative treatment. Occasionally medical care may be necessary. When a medical consultation or treatment is indicated, the safest methods available should be utilized.

Where to fast

With the possible exception of very short fasts in acute disease, such as a cold, fever, etc., all fasting should be undertaken in an institution under the direct supervision of a doctor trained in fasting supervision. A certified member of the International Association of Hygienic Physicians would by far be your best choice.

Fasting in an institution offers several advantages. The most important is the constant availability of an experienced doctor to guide and advise you. Most institutions have an educational program designed to help you better understand Natural Hygiene, the science of health. The benefits of being in a clean, quiet and emotionally supportive environment should not be underestimated.

In addition, a timely and proper termination of each fast is critical to the long-term success of the patient. Fasting under the supervision of a trained, qualified doctor is your best assurance of a well-conducted, beneficial fasting experience.

A Case Study:

Chronic gastrointestinal disorder

A woman came to the Center recently who had suffered chronic constipation for more than 20 years. She complained that she had not had a single spontaneous bowel movement during that time without the assistance of enemas, colonics or laxatives.

She fasted with us for a period of 12 days, during which time she experienced mild discomfort and referred low back pain. On the fifth day of feeding after the fast, she was having spontaneous, normally formed bowel movements, and she had continued to have them since.

The long-term follow-up for people who stay on the Natural Hygiene dietary program is excellent. Chronic constipation is definitely a problem that people can learn to live without.

Alan Goldhamer, D.C.

A natural process

Fasting, or the abstinence from food, is a means used in nature by all creatures from the beginning of time. Either by instinct or intelligence this means has been used to assist the body to relieve itself from discomfort, pain and disease.

Regulatory and reparative processes of the body are given unimpeded encouragement by the temporary omission of food. No other form of health care can boast the rewarding and gratifying results in the elimination of disease and the restoration of health.

Fasting, once considered a fad, has gained acceptance not only by a constantly increasing segment of society and has also earned the stamp of approval by many in the scientific community.

Under qualified and experienced supervision, fasting is the greatest gift which can be given to an overburdened, sick body without benefit of any other form of therapy or treatment.

William Esser, N.D., D.C.

An empowering rest

Fasting is simply a process of deep physiological rest. This rest period helps you rebuild functioning power and recover from the energy dissipation caused by hectic daily schedules and abusive living habits.

When outside stressors, dietary and therapeutic influences are eliminated during the fasting state, fasting reveals the baseline status of your body. This enables you to become more sensitive and connected to your body. This connection fosters a greater awareness of the instinctive biological and emotional requirements that are essential for the maintenance of health and wholeness.

Frank Sabatino, D.C., Ph.D.

Unfounded fears about fasting

Unfounded fear is a peculiar state of disease within the imagination, arising largely out of a lack of knowledge.

If we are slaves to unfounded fears, we are also slaves to beliefs and practices and action which are inconsistent with our well-being. So it is a matter of necessity that we understand fasting and all its facets if we are to overcome the fears that are associated with it.

Many people attempt to solve the problems of life, the distresses of the body and the anxieties of the mind with food and drugs. They have great fear about not eating because they have experienced the headaches, the weakness and distress they associate with it, and they are convinced that food and drugs are the answer to their problems.

How can you convince someone that going further without food is a matter of necessity for the recovery of his health Only through knowledge and enough suffering to change his attitudes.

The best way to dispel unfounded fear about fasting is with knowledge, knowledge that breeds confidence, confidence that engenders beliefs, and beliefs that result in correct action.

D.J. Scott, D.C.

Making wise decisions

Not everyone is a good candidate for fasting. Many factors need to be considered before a fast is undertaken. Not every condition will respond optimally to fasting and conservative care alone. Occasionally, medical care may be necessary.

At the Center we have established good working relationships with some of California's best specialists. When a medical consultation or treatment is indicated, the safest methods available should always be utilized.

Jennifer Marano, D.C.

Heightening your awareness

A wonderful thing about fasting is that it puts an interval between the behavior that you are accustomed to and the behavior that you aspire to. We tend to be creatures of habit, and the ways that we are accustomed to eating and living feel as natural to us as breathing. That is why it is so difficult for people to stop bad habits. But fasting brings your present lifestyle to an abrupt halt. It gives you an opportunity to pause, reflect and decide how you are going to conduct your life afterwards. This enables you to make a break with your past and set off in a new, more positive direction.

There is nothing routine about eating after a fast. Each meal is a celebration. After fasting, you tend to be very conscious about what you are eating, and why. Fasting heightens your awareness, as well as your appreciation for food. By fasting, we learn to eat with reverence.

It is the non-doing aspect of fasting that enables us to make behavioral stopping and pausing and interrupting our usual patterns, as we learn to take more conscious control of ourselves.

There is no better way to stop a vicious cycle of self-destructive behavior than by fasting.

Ralph C. Cinque, D.C.