BACK TO BASICS.



INTERMITTENT FASTING

A TOOL, NOT A MIRACLE

What eating in a window does, what it does not do, and how to run it without losing the muscle you paid for.

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BACK TO BASICS

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READ PAGE 12 BEFORE YOU START

Fasting suits most men and genuinely does not suit some. Page 12 lists who should talk to a doctor first. Four minutes, and it matters more than the rest of the book.

01

START HERE

Fasting has been sold to you as a switch that burns fat. Nothing about it works that way.

Skipping breakfast does not put your body into a special state where the rules stop applying. You will find men online who say otherwise, usually while selling you something.

Here is the honest version. **Fasting is a schedule, not a diet.** It changes when you eat, not how much. And for a lot of men, changing when they eat happens to make eating less far easier, because a shorter window has less room in it.

Which turns out to be enough. Most men do not fail at fat loss because they lack a metabolic trick. They fail because grazing all day is easy and counting all day is hard. Fasting removes most of the day from the argument.

WHAT THIS BOOK GIVES YOU

- **The three protocols** laid out with real numbers, so you can see what a day looks like.
- **An honest read of the research**, including the parts that do not support the hype.
- **Who should not do this**, which most fasting books leave out entirely.
- **A two week start**, so you do not go from three meals to one overnight and quit by Thursday.



02

WHAT FASTING IS

You pick a window of hours. Inside the window you eat. Outside it you do not. Nothing else to the definition.

A man on 16/8 eats between noon and eight, then stops. A man on 20/4 eats between four and eight. Both take in the same food they always did, squeezed into fewer hours.

WHAT BREAKS A FAST

FINE DURING THE FAST	BREAKS IT
Water	Anything with calories
Black coffee	Milk, cream, sugar in the coffee
Plain tea	Juice, soda, sports drinks
Salt and electrolytes	Protein shakes and BCAAs
Zero calorie drinks	"Just a splash" of anything

The splash of milk will not ruin your day. Your results come from the total, not the purity of the fast. But if you are going to fast, fast properly, or the discipline leaks everywhere else.

WHY MEN ARE DRAWN TO THIS

You already skip breakfast half the time. Fasting takes something you were doing by accident and gives it a shape and a name. A man with a job, a commute and meetings until two would rather eat two proper meals than police six small ones. Nothing wrong with that, and it is the real reason this works for the men it works for.

03

WHY IT WORKS

One reason, and it is not the one you have been told.

A shorter window holds less food. Six meals a day gives you six chances to overeat. Two gives you two. Most men eating in an eight hour window take in fewer calories than they did across sixteen, without counting a thing and often without noticing.

Fewer calories in than out means fat comes off. Same as every method that has ever worked.

> **THE INSULIN STORY, AND WHY IT DOES NOT HOLD**
>
> You will hear that fasting keeps insulin low, and that low insulin means fat cannot be stored, so fasting burns fat by itself. Insulin does rise when you eat and fat storage does pause while it does. But across a whole day the total calories decide the outcome. Studies putting people in a deficit on junk food still show fat loss. A body is more complicated than one hormone.

WHAT FASTING IS GENUINELY GOOD AT

- **Removing decisions.** Sixteen hours a day where eating is simply not on the table. No negotiating with yourself at eleven in the morning.
- **Making big meals possible.** Two meals of a thousand calories feels like eating properly. Six meals of three hundred feels like rationing.
- **Fitting a real schedule.** If your day runs from six to two with no break, one window beats six alarms.
- **Blunting evening eating.** A man who closes his window at eight has a rule to point at when the kitchen calls at ten.

None of that is metabolic magic. All of it is behavior, and behavior decides this.

04

WHAT THE RESEARCH SHOWS

Worth knowing what stands up, because plenty of what gets repeated does not.

THE CLAIM	WHERE IT STANDS
Fasting helps you lose fat	Yes, when it lowers your calories. Trials putting one group on a window and another on the same calories without one find no difference in weight lost.
Fasting improves insulin sensitivity	Decent evidence, including trials on 20 hour fasts and on men fasting through Ramadan.
Fasting extends lifespan	Shown in mice and rats. Not demonstrated in humans, and rodent lifespan results have a poor record of carrying over.
Fasting spikes growth hormone	True, and it matters less than it sounds. The studies showing muscle gain from raised growth hormone were run on patients who were deficient in it.
Low insulin burns fat by itself	No. Total calories decide it.

TWO THINGS YOU WILL HEAR THAT I HAVE LEFT OUT

"We evolved to fast." The thrifty gene idea, that our bodies are still built for feast and famine, sounds convincing and has not held up well. Researchers looking directly at obesity genes have not found the pattern the theory predicts. Fasting works or does not work on its own merits, and it does not need a story about cavemen.

"The longest lived populations all eat this way." The Blue Zones data is now seriously disputed, largely over how reliably those ages were ever recorded. Not a claim I am willing to put in your hands.

Fasting is a good tool with real benefits. Nobody needs to oversell it, and the men who do are usually selling something else alongside it.

05

THE THREE PROTOCOLS

Every table below holds the same 3,000 calories a day, so you can see how the window changes the size of the meals rather than the total. Use your own number from page 10. Three thousand is only here to make the comparison readable.

A NORMAL DAY, FOR COMPARISON

Six meals, no window. 3,000 calories.

TIME	WHAT HAPPENS	CALORIES
6:00 AM	Meal 1	500
9:00 AM	Meal 2	500
12:00 PM	Meal 3	500
3:00 PM	Meal 4	500
6:00 PM	Meal 5	500
9:00 PM	Meal 6	500

16/8 · START HERE

Fast 16 hours, eat for 8. The most common, and the one to begin with.

TIME	WHAT HAPPENS	CALORIES
4:00 AM to 4:00 PM	Fasting	0
4:00 PM	Meal 1	1,000
8:00 PM	Meal 2	1,000
12:00 AM	Meal 3	1,000

Move the window to suit your life. Noon to eight suits most men better than four to midnight. The hours matter far less than keeping the same eight every day.

05 · CONTINUED

THE HARDER TWO

20/4

Fast 20 hours, eat for 4. Two large meals.

TIME	WHAT HAPPENS	CALORIES
8:00 PM to 4:00 PM	Fasting	0
4:00 PM	Meal 1	1,500
8:00 PM	Meal 2	1,500

Fifteen hundred calories in one sitting is a large amount of food. Most men underestimate how uncomfortable that is until they try it.

TWO FULL FAST DAYS

Eat normally five days. Two days of no food at all. Sometimes called 5:2.

DAY	EATING	CALORIES
Monday	Fasting	0
Tuesday	Eating	4,200
Wednesday	Eating	4,200
Thursday	Eating	4,200
Friday	Fasting	0
Saturday	Eating	4,200
Sunday	Eating	4,200

Five days at 4,200 comes to the same 21,000 a week as seven days at 3,000. The week balances. The days do not.

DO NOT START HERE

A full 24 hour fast belongs to men who have already run a window for months. Concentration goes, training suffers, and most men who try it cold last about nine days. Earn it, or skip it entirely. The results are no better.

06

WHICH ONE TO PICK

16/8, almost certainly. Everything else in this book is here so you know what exists, not because you need it.

IF YOUR DAY LOOKS LIKE	USE
Normal hours, family dinner matters	16/8, window noon to eight
Early start, hungry in the morning	16/8, window ten to six
Night shift	16/8 built around your waking hours, not the clock
You genuinely prefer two big meals	20/4
You have fasted for months and want a change	Two fast days

THE RULE THAT BEATS THE PROTOCOL

Pick the window you can keep on your worst week, not your best one. A man on a comfortable 16/8 for six months will be leaner than a man who did 20/4 brilliantly for eleven days and then stopped.

WHERE TO PUT THE WINDOW

Close it around the meal that matters to you. For most men that is dinner with their family. Skipping breakfast costs you very little. Skipping dinner costs you the table.

Train inside the window if you can. Eating before and after a session is easier on your training than lifting on an empty stomach and eating hours later. If you can only train fasted, that works too, but eat soon after.



07

YOUR NUMBERS

THE WINDOW IS NOT THE PLAN

Shortening your eating hours usually drops your calories on its own. Usually. Plenty of men eat 3,000 calories in an eight hour window without breaking a sweat, wonder why nothing is happening, and blame the fasting. You still need a number.

STEP 1. WHAT YOU BURN AT REST

Men: (10 x weight in kg) + (6.25 x height in cm) − (5 x age) + 5

Pounds to kilograms, divide by 2.2. Inches to centimeters, multiply by 2.54.

STEP 2. WHAT YOU BURN IN A DAY

Multiply by how often you train to get your TDEE. Build everything off this number, never off the one above it.

HOW OFTEN YOU TRAIN	MULTIPLY BMR BY
Not at all	1.2
1 to 2 times a week	1.4
2 to 3 times a week	1.5
4 to 5 times a week	1.6
6 to 7 times a week	1.7

STEP 3. PICK A DIRECTION

To **lose fat**, eat your TDEE x 0.8. To **hold where you are**, eat your TDEE. To **build**, add about 10%.

STEP 4. PROTEIN COMES FIRST

1 gram per pound of your goal weight, every day, fasting or not. Fitting 190 grams into two meals takes planning. Fitting it into six does not. Protein is the single hardest part of fasting and the part men quietly skip.

08

EATING IN THE WINDOW

Fasting decides when. It has no opinion about what, and that is where most men come unstuck.

Sixteen hours of discipline followed by two thousand calories of takeaway is not a fat loss plan. Plenty of men do exactly that, lose nothing, and conclude fasting does not work for them.

BUILD EACH MEAL THE SAME WAY

1. **Protein first, and a lot of it.** With only two or three meals, each one needs 50 to 70 grams. A palm and a half of meat or fish, minimum.
2. **Vegetables next.** Volume matters more here than on a normal schedule, because you are trying to feel satisfied on fewer sittings.
3. **Then carbs.** Rice, potatoes, oats. Put most of them in the meal nearest your training.
4. **Fat last and measured.** Easy to overshoot when meals are large. A thumb per meal.

BREAKING THE FAST

Do not open the window with something enormous. After sixteen hours a very large meal sits badly and a lot of men feel wrecked for an hour afterwards. Start with protein and vegetables, wait twenty minutes, then eat the rest. Your first week will teach you this whether you read it or not.

THE HUNGER SETTLES

Days three to seven are the hard ones, and they are hard because your body expects food at the old times, not because you need it. For most men it settles inside a week or two. Push water and black coffee through the gap. If you are still genuinely struggling after two weeks, your window is wrong for your life. Widen it rather than quit.

09

WHO SHOULD NOT DO THIS

Fasting suits most men. It genuinely does not suit some, and no fasting book I have read bothers to say so.

SPEAK TO YOUR DOCTOR FIRST

- **You take medication for diabetes.** Insulin and several tablets can drop your blood sugar dangerously low when you skip meals. This one is not a formality.
- **You take medication that has to be taken with food.** Common, and easy to forget once your morning has no meal in it.
- **You have a history of disordered eating.** A structure built on restriction can pull old patterns straight back.
- **You are on blood pressure or heart medication.** Worth a conversation about timing.
- **You are underweight, or already struggle to eat enough.** A smaller window makes an existing problem worse.
- **You have low blood sugar episodes,** or you get shaky, faint or foggy when a meal runs late.

STOP AND EAT IF THIS HAPPENS

Dizziness, cold sweats, shaking, a racing heart, or the sort of confusion where you cannot follow a sentence. None of that is toughness being tested. Eat something, and if it keeps happening, this is not your tool.

AND ONE MORE, LESS SERIOUS

If you have a physical job and start at six in the morning, a noon window may leave you working the hardest hours of your day on nothing. Not dangerous, just miserable, and miserable makes men quit. Move the window earlier or leave fasting alone. Nobody has ever needed it to get lean.

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FASTING AND MUSCLE

The straight answer: fasting is a fine tool for losing fat and a mediocre one for building muscle.

Your muscle grows in response to protein arriving through the day. Each serving switches growth on for a few hours, then the switch stops responding until enough time has passed. Three or four servings spread across the day trigger it more often than two do.

So a man eating in a four hour window is leaving something on the table. Not everything, and not enough to matter if fasting is the only way he will stay consistent. But something.

THE GROWTH HORMONE CLAIM

Fasting does raise growth hormone, and this gets used to argue you will build muscle while you fast. The studies behind that were run on patients who were deficient in growth hormone to begin with. In healthy men the results are mixed, and some of the lean mass gained looks like connective tissue and water rather than muscle. The rise is real. What it buys a healthy lifter is small.

IF YOU WANT BOTH

- **Use 16/8, not 20/4.** Eight hours fits three protein feedings. Four hours does not.
- **Train inside the window,** with a meal before and after where you can. If you must train fasted, eat within an hour of finishing.
- **Hit your protein before anything else.** Miss it and fasting will cost you muscle rather than just slowing you down.
- **Do not fast while chasing a personal best.** Pick one hard thing at a time.

You cannot build serious muscle and lose serious fat at once, unless you are carrying a lot of fat, new to training, or coming back after years away. Fasting does not change that. Nothing does.

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YOUR FIRST TWO WEEKS

Going from six meals to two overnight is how men last nine days. Walk it in.

DAYS	WINDOW	WHAT YOU ARE DOING
1 to 3	12 hours	Stop eating after dinner. Nothing after eight.
4 to 7	14 hours	Push breakfast back two hours.
8 to 11	15 hours	Another hour. Black coffee covers the gap.
12 to 14	16 hours	Your window. Hold it here.

Two weeks to arrive somewhere you could have jumped to on day one. The difference is that you will still be doing it in March.

WHAT TO EXPECT

- **Days 1 to 2.** Easier than you expected. Novelty carries you.
- **Days 3 to 7.** The hard stretch. Hungry at the old times, slightly irritable, thinking about food more than you would like.
- **Week 2.** It settles. Morning hunger fades and most men stop noticing.
- **Week 3 onward.** Normal. If it is not normal by then, your window is in the wrong place.

> **THREE THINGS THAT MAKE WEEK ONE SURVIVABLE**
>
> Water, constantly. Black coffee or plain tea at the times you used to eat. And a pinch of salt in your water if you train hard or sweat a lot, since some early fasting headaches come down to low sodium.

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QUESTIONS

WILL I LOSE MUSCLE FASTING?

Not if you hit your protein and keep lifting. Men lose muscle from too little protein and too big a deficit, not from the clock.

CAN I TRAIN FASTED?

Yes. A 2025 review pooling the trials found no meaningful difference in strength or muscle gained between training fasted and training fed. What does matter is protein after the session. If you feel weak or lightheaded, move your window so you train after a meal instead.

DOES COFFEE BREAK THE FAST?

Black coffee, no. Milk, cream and sugar, yes. A splash of milk will not undo your day, but keep it honest.

WHAT ABOUT WEEKENDS?

Hold the same window. Two loose days a week undoes five good ones, and that arithmetic does not care that you fasted for the other sixteen hours.

DO I HAVE TO KEEP DOING IT FOREVER?

No. Fasting is one way to eat less, not a permanent state. Use it while it makes your life easier and stop when it stops.

NOTHING IS HAPPENING. WHAT NOW?

Count your calories for a week. Almost every man who stalls on fasting is eating more in the window than he thinks. The window is a lever, not a guarantee.

Remember this

A SHORTER DAY TO EAT IN. NOT A SHORTCUT.

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BACK TO BASICS

WHEN YOU NEED MORE

This book gives you a schedule. It cannot see your bloodwork, your medication, the shift you work, or what your appetite does at ten at night.

Most men who come to me have already tried. Gym memberships. Programs online. Meal plans. Some of it worked for a while. Most of it did not last. That was not a discipline problem. It was built for nobody in particular.

Back To Basics is built for one man at a time. We look at what is going on inside your body before we build anything. We work around the injuries you are carrying. And you are never doing it alone.

1. Apply. It takes about two minutes.
2. We look at it, and you book a call.
3. We decide together whether this is the right fit.

APPLY NOW

apply.joinbacktobasics.com

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