

## Myths about fasting

There are several misconceptions about fasting which are incorrect:

- i. Fasting will make one lose muscles – Fasting is not equivalent to starvation. Structured fasting such as intermittent fasting (TRE )program allows consumption of a reasonable amount of healthy holistic meal on a daily basis. Since food intake is regular, it is not expected to cause loss of muscle mass. On the other hand, very low calorie, low carbohydrate diet plans which rob the muscles of the vital glucose energy can lead to muscle loss.
- ii. Fasting will lead to overeating – When one breaks the overnight fast with healthy holistic foods low in sugar and rich in fiber and healthy fats, overeating does not occur. However, if the fast gets broken with sugary foods, overeating can become the problem. Fasting ensures that overall calorie intake in the 24-hour day cycle is low because fewer meals are getting consumed in a day.
- iii. The brain needs glucose constantly – Brain works very well during fasting. By evolution in both prehistoric man and animals, less glucose in the blood from starvation meant a need for sharper mental capacity to procure food. In a healthy individual, the glycogen and fat reserves provide enough glucose and ketone energy for the brain to function well. The brain is not sharp when a large meal gets eaten, because the blood shifts away from the brain to the digestive tract.
- iv. Hunger and food cravings will overpower the will to fast – The scientific evidence suggests that intermittent fasting programs are well tolerated. Some fasting individuals may even experience a sense of euphoria or wellbeing. Starting the routine of fasting may require a little will, but the body adjusts to the fasting routine very quickly. The low insulin levels help greatly by curbing the hunger and food cravings. The healthy fat in the holistic diet effectively postpones the hunger.
- v. Fasting will deprive the body of essential nutrients – In contrast to lowcalorie diet plans, TRE program allows for holistic meals in the desired amounts. That is not expected to cause a macro and micronutrient deficiency.

**Conclusion** – Intermittent Fasting, especially the 16-18 hour fasting period between the night meal and the next morning meal, is very easy to adopt. The only individuals, who will face initial difficulty adapting to TRE program are:

- Individuals who have Insulin resistance and prediabetes situation – Metabolic syndrome. These individuals suffer from food cravings. To overcome this, they will require a graded slow increase in the fasting hours starting with 12-hour nighttime fasting schedule. Then slowly increase the fasting duration by 1 hour every two-week intervals.

Additionally, these individuals will require healthy high-fat diet (Coconut oil, olive oil, ghee, cold compressed oils – mustard oil, sesame oil, rice bran oil) up to 40 – 50 gms/ day to subdue their appetite. As outlined above, the healthy fat in the diet delays stomach emptying time and minimizes hunger and food cravings.

- Individuals with nutrient deficiency hunger – This group includes poor eaters; whose diet is not holistic. Nutrient deficiency means not enough of minerals, vitamins and cleansing antioxidants in food. Nutrient deficiency also causes food cravings. To overcome this problem, one has to eat nutrient-rich holistic plant-based diets rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lentils, legumes, seeds, nuts and 40 – 50ml of healthy fats.