



Fast or Feast?

By John Mamana, M.D.

As we near the holidays, busy executives look forward to relaxing with family and enjoying mouthwatering feasts. However, we start dreading the accompanying weight gain and may enter a cycle of skipping meals to cut calories. Then there are those days where an overly busy schedule means missed meals.

While most executives are aware that skipping meals one day and overeating the next causes negative metabolic changes – you’ve probably also heard that fasting can provide healthful benefits. Besides the headaches, a rumbling tummy and crankiness – is meal skipping a good weight management tool? Probably not. In fact, researchers in a 2007 study published in the medical journal [Metabolism](#) found that skipping meals during the day and eating one large meal in the evening resulted in potentially risky metabolic changes. The meal skippers had elevated fasting glucose levels and a delayed insulin response. Repeated over the long term, these conditions could lead to diabetes. Additionally, observational studies and short-term experiments indicate an association between poor health and skipping meals.

However, some studies indicate that fasting provided measurable metabolic benefits for obese people. Associated animal studies have shown that intermittent feeding then fasting reduced the incidence of diabetes and improved certain indicators of cardiovascular health.

Interestingly, research generally shows multiple benefits to calorie restriction – if managed on alternate days. In a paper published in [Free Radical Biology & Medicine](#), overweight adults with mild asthma ate normal meals one day, and the following day consumed less than 20 percent of their normal caloric intake, about 400 or 500 calories, or the equivalent of a normal meal. After two months, the people in this study lost an average of 8 percent of their body weight, and asthma-related symptoms were improved. Markers of inflammation were significantly lower, and participants had lower cholesterol and triglycerides, with “striking” reductions in markers of oxidative stress. It appears that skipping meals during the day and overeating later – or skipping meals to make up for overeating will cause harmful metabolic changes, while embarking on a controlled intermittent eating plan that results in lower calorie intake can be healthful.



If you have eaten too much, you can relieve the bloated and uncomfortable feeling with a cup of herbal tea. Peppermint tea usually works on stomach aches for older children and adults. Chamomile tea is calming, and ginger, fennel or teas made specifically to assist with digestion can also sooth a bloated stomach.

Alternatively, one drop of peppermint essential oil on a sugar cube dissolved slowly will also settle your stomach. Resting with a warm water bottle on your upper abdomen for 20-30 minutes can help stomach muscles relax and allow some of the food to move through your GI system. Followed by a short easy walk, you should begin to feel some relief.

If you are struggling with weight issues or feeling as though your metabolism may be out of whack, contact your doctor at Executive MD for dietary recommendations.

John Mamana, M.D.

Executive MD

John@ExecutiveMD.com

703-260-6455