

Intermittent Fasting: Simpler Eating, Stronger Results

How time-restricted eating supports fat loss, metabolic health, and training goals

Intermittent fasting (IF) is less a diet and more a pattern of eating: you concentrate your meals into a defined window and let the body rest from digestion the rest of the time. The most popular version—16:8—means fasting for 16 hours and eating within an 8-hour window. For many trainees and athletes it has become a practical way to control calories, improve body composition, and simplify daily nutrition without constant meal timing.

An Evolutionary Advantage

For the vast majority of human history we were hunter-gatherers. Reliable, frequent meals were the exception, not the rule. Days could pass between successful hunts. In that environment the body that stayed sharp, strong, and mobile while hungry was the body that secured the next meal. Far from shutting down, the human system adapted: mobilizing stored fat for fuel, heightening mental clarity, and preserving physical capacity so the hunt could still be won.

Modern intermittent fasting deliberately taps that same biology. By recreating periods of intentional abstinence, we signal the body to shift into a more efficient, fat-adapted state—the same state that once helped our ancestors perform athletically under scarcity. In short, we are using evolution to our benefit: leveraging an ancient survival mechanism for contemporary goals of leanness, metabolic health, and training resilience.

Key Benefits Backed by Research

Systematic reviews and meta-analyses consistently show that intermittent fasting produces meaningful reductions in body weight, fat mass, waist circumference, and visceral fat. When protein intake and resistance training are maintained, lean mass is typically preserved. Additional cardiometabolic improvements frequently reported include lower fasting insulin, improved insulin sensitivity, better lipid profiles, and modest reductions in blood pressure.

- Effective fat loss with relatively high adherence for many people
- Preservation of muscle when protein targets and lifting are prioritized
- Improvements in markers of metabolic health beyond simple calorie counting
- Greater simplicity: fewer decisions about when and how often to eat

What the Studies Show

Umbrella reviews of randomized trials indicate that IF outperforms non-intervention diets on waist circumference, fat mass, fasting insulin, LDL, total cholesterol, and triglycerides, while supporting fat-free mass. In athletic populations, time-restricted eating (commonly 16:8) has been shown to reduce fat mass while maintaining lean mass and, in some cases, improving power-to-weight ratios. Combining IF with structured exercise amplifies body-composition benefits without impairing training adaptations when energy and protein needs are met inside the eating window.

Athletes and Public Figures Who Use It

Intermittent fasting has moved well beyond general wellness circles into the routines of high-profile performers and athletes:

- **Hugh Jackman** has repeatedly used a 16:8 approach while preparing for Wolverine roles, citing it as a way to stay lean while building muscle.
- **Terry Crews** has followed a consistent 16:8 pattern for years—often delaying his first meal until early afternoon—crediting the structure with helping him control intake and maintain his physique.
- **Chris Hemsworth** and his trainer have used time-restricted eating during aggressive fat-loss phases for film roles, describing the results as highly effective when paired with training.
- Endurance athletes and team-sport players have tested time-restricted protocols in research settings with favorable body-composition outcomes and no consistent drop in performance when fueling is managed properly.

A Quick Guide to Implementing It

Most people succeed by starting simply and protecting the fundamentals:

- **Choose a sustainable window** — 16:8 is the most common (e.g., 12 pm–8 pm or 10 am–6 pm). Earlier windows may offer slight metabolic advantages for some; the best window is the one you can repeat.
- **Progress gradually** — Begin with 12–14 hours of overnight fasting and extend the window over 1–3 weeks rather than jumping straight to 16 hours.
- **Prioritize protein** — Aim for 1.6–2.2 g per kg of body weight inside the eating window, distributed across meals, to support muscle retention.
- **Train intelligently** — Resistance training remains essential. Many prefer lifting toward the end of the fast or early in the feeding window; experiment to find what feels strongest.
- **Stay hydrated** — Water, black coffee, and unsweetened tea are fine during the fast. Electrolytes can help if you train hard or live in a hot climate.
- **Listen and adjust** — Energy, sleep, training quality, and mood are the real feedback. If performance or recovery suffers, widen the window or increase calories before abandoning the approach.

Intermittent fasting is not magic, but it is a powerful organizing principle. By compressing the eating window, many people naturally reduce calories, improve metabolic markers, and simplify their day while still fueling hard training. Paired with high protein and progressive resistance work, it becomes a practical tool for staying lean, strong, and consistent.

Eat with intention. Train with purpose. Let the window work for you.

This article is educational and summarizes current research on intermittent fasting alongside practices reported by athletes and public figures. Individual responses vary. Those with medical conditions, a history of disordered eating, or who are pregnant/breastfeeding should seek professional guidance before starting.