



The fasting diet – fantastic or fad?

SINCE Dr Michael Mosley presented a BBC Two Horizon documentary entitled Eat, Fast And Live Longer last year fasting has taken the UK by storm.



Eating raw vegetables like celery is a good way to restrict your calorie intake (pic posed by model)

Research suggests that not only does this eating plan, which involves drastically reducing your calorie intake for two days a week, help you shed the pounds but it has numerous additional benefits from cutting cholesterol levels to possibly even extending your life.

What is it?

The premise behind intermittent fasting is simple. For two days each week you fast and for the other five days you eat what you like.

Thankfully, though, fasting does not mean consuming nothing at all.

Instead it involves restricting calories, cutting down from the recommended 2,000 per day to 500 for women and 600 for men.

How do I do it?

Either fast for two days a week consecutively or spread the days throughout the week. How you choose to eat your 500 calories is up to you.

“You could eat three very small meals or one large one but most people bookend the day with breakfast and dinner with perhaps a tiny snack in between,” explains nutritionist Angela Dowden.

What are the health benefits?

There are proven links between fasting and longevity. “One of the links seems to be a hormone called insulin-like growth factor 1 (IGF-1),” says Dr Mosley.

“You need adequate levels of IGF-1 when you are growing but high levels later in life appear to lead to accelerated ageing. Fasting lowers IGF-1 levels and appears to switch on DNA repair genes. The reason seems to be that when we run out of food our bodies change from growth to repair mode.”

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