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Megan [00:00:06] Before we get started with today's episode, I would like to quickly read you our podcast disclaimer.

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[00:01:13] All right. And now we'll get started with today's episode.

[00:01:19] Hi, everyone. It's Megan Ramos here with another episode of The Fasting Method podcast. Today, I'm joined by my lovely co-host, Dr. Nadia Pateguana, and in this episode, we are going to answer your burning fasting questions. We want to thank everybody for emailing in so many great questions. We are at a question-log capacity. So, just a heads-up, if you're sending more questions in, we're doing our best to get through them. So today we're going to try to get through some of the more popular questions; we've prepared six for you today.

[00:01:58] So I'm going to kick things off with the first question. "Does fasting help with brain health or is diet more important?"

[00:02:09] This is a really good question. I think both matter a lot. I think you can't really optimize your brain health without doing both of these. So when it comes to diet, you've got to make sure that you're giving your brain some really good healthy fats to help it function optimally. You're giving it those ketone bodies that can cross the blood-brain barrier, really premium fuel for the brain. You want to minimize inflammation. You want to make sure that proteins aren't getting-- [unintelligible] so diet is really critically important. Fasting, I think, is important as well because it really helps in a variety of ways. You know, it really reduces inflammation, it reduces insulin, you know, it stops all of that metabolic damage in the body in more of a turbo-charged way. And it induces this physiological phenomenon called autophagy in a really turbo-charged way.

[00:03:09] Autophagy is this physiological process where old and damaged cells and proteins are taken apart and put back together. So they're essentially like new; they're not new cells or new proteins, but they are now repaired cells and repaired proteins. And this is great for anti-aging, slowing down the progression of disease processes, or disease prevention, especially neurological conditions. So you'll hear people talk about autophagy in the scope of things like multiple sclerosis or MS, Parkinson's disease, Alzheimer's disease. So I think it's very important to do the fasting.

[00:03:48] Now, you can induce autophagy through really intensive exercise. You can also induce it through ketogenic diets, but fasting is the most potent way of doing it. So really the combination of them both. Making sure that you're eating a diet that's low in processed

and refined foods, that's really minimizing inflammation, that's giving your body really great building blocks, like really good, healthy, natural fats to maintain and function well. And then to fast for more turbo-charged inflammation reduction, good metabolic health, and that autophagy for the cellular recycling.

[00:04:32] All right, Nadia. I'll throw it over to you for question number two.

Nadia [00:04:36] All right. So this question I actually answer quite a bit in our meetings as well, our Community meetings. "Does fasting wreck your metabolism?"

[00:04:45] So people will often use words such as 'wreck' or 'damage' when they are talking about fasting, certain types of diet, or when they're talking about calories and exercise. They're constantly worried that (because we've talked so much about sort of the hormone theory of metabolism and weight loss, and then the caloric theory behind weight loss) in these conversations we throw around a lot of words and we throw around a lot of thoughts. And so one of the thoughts that people have, especially when they hear Megan, myself, or Dr. Fung talk about low-calorie diets, and why people stop losing weight, or they can't continue losing weight when they've exercised a ton and cut out their calories, why the 'calorie in, calories out', why the 'eat less, move more' theory isn't as useful as people would like it to be or as conventional medicine would have you think, somehow the takeaway message that a lot of people walk away with is that low-calorie diets wreck your metabolism. And then they get that confused with, "Well, if low calorie wrecks your metabolism, then fasting must also wreck your metabolism."

[00:06:01] And so I really want you to think about these words - wreck and damage - as it relates to your metabolism. I don't want you to look at it in that way. What I want you to look at, whether you're talking about certain fasting protocols or whether people are talking about, you know, your history of low-calorie diets and, unfortunately, the lack of success that you had there, it wasn't necessarily because it wrecked your metabolism, it was that low-calorie diets particularly slowed down your metabolism. Okay? In that, if you eat less, of course, your body burns less. It's just an adaptation that the body naturally goes through, which isn't necessarily a negative thing. Your body does a really great job of adapting to its environment, so, of course, if you eat less, you're going to burn less, right? If you move more, it's natural that you feel hungrier. So that's what you have, historically, probably already experienced. So it isn't so much 'wrecking' or 'damaging' as it is your metabolism just adjusting to how much you're eating and how much you're moving.

[00:06:53] Now, when it comes to fasting, I think that people will often confuse fasting with a low-calorie diet. Just because you're fasting, it doesn't necessarily mean that you're eating less. In some cases it does; In some cases people do eat less once they start eating low-carb and fasting, and that's not necessarily a bad thing, right? Because of course, if in the past you had a really hard time controlling how much you ate, if besides insulin resistance, you also had some leptin resistance, you may have felt at some point in your life that you had very little control over how much you ate, and maybe you may have even felt like you were eating too much. So, yes, fasting and eating a whole-food, real-food type of diet will give you some food freedom in the sense that you may feel like you have the ability to become satiated or satisfied by eating less than you did before, maybe you're not feeling hungry all the time and constantly eating. That's not a bad thing at all.

[00:08:09] But does fasting wreck or damage your metabolism? Absolutely not. In fact, a lot of people, and I'm one of those people-- I, actually, probably-- not probably, certainly eat more - more calories. Not that I'm counting calories, but because I have apps like the rest

of you, I am aware of the fact that I actually eat more (I also burn more) than I did before when I was a grazer, when I used to eat very low-calorie, more high-carb type of foods. I ate very little protein and very low fat my entire life. I had no appetite for those types of foods. You know, I wasn't the meat-and-vegetable kind of girl. I was more of the, you know, bread-and-sweets type of girl. So I was eating very, very little. So my metabolism was certainly slower because I was eating a lot less than I eat now. So fasting *can* lead to some people actually eating less, and fasting can actually lead to some people eating more. Why? Because I fast for periods of time. I mostly follow TRE (time-restricted eating), but I eat full meals: full, satiating, nourishing meals. In the past, I never had a full meal, ever. All I did was graze and snack on very low-calorie, high-sugary type of things.

[00:09:25] So I just want you to understand that there's a big difference between fasting and starving, or fasting and low-calorie. It's not the same thing. And even if you've had incidences in the past with low-calorie diets where, you know, you were eating very, very low calorie and therefore your metabolism was very, very slow, that isn't necessarily what's going to happen if you fast.

[00:09:47] One thing that you may encounter with fasting, especially people who fall into the pattern of eating OMAD (one meal a day). This is very, very common in our community. There's nothing wrong with OMAD, absolutely nothing wrong with eating one meal a day. In fact, some people do very, very well with OMAD. But what can happen is, if you're looking to lose weight, you may notice that you (even if you lose a little bit of weight when you first start fasting and doing OMAD) may stop losing weight very, very quickly. And again, this is because your metabolism adapts to that. And so it's not that it has wrecked anything or damaged anything, it's just that your body has adapted. And that is not necessarily a bad thing except when you're trying to lose weight. If you're trying to lose weight, you don't want your metabolism to slow down.

[00:10:39] For longevity-- if you want some more information about this, Dr. Fung wrote a great book called 'The Longevity Solution' with Dr. James DiNicolantonio, and they actually talk quite a bit about cultures that eat lower amounts, lower-calorie types of diets, and how for longevity, that's not necessarily a bad thing. It just does not work out well when you're trying to actively lose weight.

[00:11:04] So wrecking and damaging your metabolism is not what's happening when your body slows down or when you stop losing weight. What's happening is your body is adapting. So OMAD or fasting does not wreck or damage your metabolism, but if you're not following the appropriate fasting protocol-- and we've talked quite a bit about this. I think we may even talk about this sometime, or we have in a more recent podcast - what the right protocol was for weight loss. You want to look at this good balance between eating and fasting for continuous weight loss, but you don't have to worry about any fasting protocol wrecking or damaging your metabolism. If you start to notice that things are slowing down, then maybe you want to look at that balance. Make sure that you're eating a bit more. You can still do your fasting protocols, but look at your eating days and how much and what you're eating on your eating days. Okay? I hope that was pretty clear.

Megan [00:12:02] All righty. "Can you fast while exercising, and would it help speed up weight loss?"

[00:12:08] So the answer is yes, you can absolutely fast while exercising. Now, if you're new to fasting and doing some longer fasts, you may want to take it easy for the first few weeks till your body's adapted. So during those first few weeks, you may feel like sticking

to walking, brisk walking, yoga, pilates, mobility training, or bodyweight training, something a little bit more mild than, you know, heavy weight training, CrossFit type of things. But, you know, once you've had a couple of consistent weeks or a few consistent weeks of fasting under your belt, you'll notice that you actually have more energy on your fasting days than your eating days. So when you get to that point, you can do your physical activity.

[00:12:55] I actually had my best weight training session, ever, at something like 96 hours fasted. It was really wild. And my trainer at the time who thought that I was just crazy for fasting and being a fasting individual [laughs] was actually so blown away. I just had so much energy. I had all this fat fuel circulating around. My body was really efficient, making glucose when it needed it and accessing my fat stores so I totally crushed it. And they invited me in a few weeks later to give a talk about fasting so they could learn more because they were all very, very confused by it. So with that being said, it's perfectly okay.

[00:13:39] Hydration is important, though. A lot of people think when they drink water that they're instantly hydrated and that's not true. You actually, in a way, have to digest it. So when you drink water, it takes about 60 to 90 minutes to actually hydrate your body. And it's also important to remember that hydration isn't just water, it's also electrolytes. And, you know, we really prioritize sodium and magnesium at The Fasting Method, especially sodium when it comes to exercising. So if I'm going to work out at 5 o'clock, at around 3:30, I'll take about a liter of water and I'll add in about half a teaspoon of salt. I will drink that (I try to finish it within 30 minutes.) and then I've got about an hour before I hit the gym, and then I will rehydrate afterwards.

[00:14:33] Now, I don't recommend everybody starts at half a teaspoon of salt. It's best to start with a pinch and work your way up. And of course, you've got to talk to your doctor or healthcare provider, as well, before making any sort of nutritional changes. But hydration is just really important. You can also have bone broth, low-carb, vegetable broth, pickle juice that's sugar-free to help hydrate before and after as well.

[00:14:58] And yes, working out in a fasting state can help expedite weight loss. That's why you'll find a lot of personal trainers or bodybuilders recommend exercising first thing in the morning. There are benefits to doing so additionally to weight loss, but most people are fasted for a good 12 to 14 hours first thing in the morning, if not a bit longer, depending on whether you're in our program or not. [laughs] But yes, there are benefits to exercising in a fasting state for speeding up fat loss.

[00:15:32] All right, Nadia, back over to you for question number four.

Nadia [00:15:36] Got it. Okay. So, "Are there any benefits of fasting for someone who has optimal biomarkers, for example, an A1C of 4.9%, and is at their ideal body weight? If so, what does that look like?"

[00:15:51] Great question. Many times people will eventually achieve this (these goals and this optimal health) through fasting. And sometimes people nowadays, especially, people come to us, you know, they are these biohackers, as you may have heard them be called, people who are just looking for sort of optimal strategies for keeping their health and for longevity. So is fasting beneficial to people who are at optimal health, whether you've gotten to this optimal health because you've fasted, because you followed a real-food diet, or because you just have always had optimal health and you want to maintain this optimal health? And the answer is absolutely.

[00:16:34] Basically, what I want you to think about is that insulin resistance and metabolic syndrome is on a spectrum. Like most things, like most conditions, they are on a spectrum. You can be really, really high up on that spectrum (meaning you can be very, very insulin resistant with a lot of expressions of insulin resistance, such as obesity, diabetes, PCOS, fatty liver, etc.) or you can be really, really, really low on that spectrum and may not have any expressions of insulin resistance. And so remember that you can bring yourself up that spectrum, meaning you can become more and more insulin resistant over time and develop more and more expressions of insulin resistance over the course of the years. That's why it is believed that many of these conditions are chronic and progressive (such as diabetes and obesity), meaning that they become worse and worse and they're for life because people tend to, over the course of their life and years, become more and more insulin resistant.

[00:17:30] But luckily we now know and understand that through fasting and other biohacking techniques, you can reverse insulin resistance and conditions such as diabetes and obesity. So you can go up the spectrum and you can go down the spectrum, right? You can make yourself worse, but you can also reverse all of these concerns, or most of these concerns, and make yourself better.

[00:17:51] So when you are looking at your own health and consider yourself to be in optimal health, what you want to do is maintain yourself there. You want to *prevent* further development of insulin resistance. And the best way to do this is to create a really good balance between eating and fasting for you to stay where you are right now. And that often looks like TRE (so that was your second question, "What does that look like?"). We're always talking about TRE. You guys by now know I'm a huge fan of repetition. I think that when we're learning new things, particularly, it's really important to repeat things and to hear things over and over.

[00:18:30] So, yes, I think that for you to maintain this optimal health and these optimal biomarkers, you're looking at, one, understanding the critical importance of TRE (time-restricted eating), which basically means full meals, no snacks, whether that means three meals or two meals, or maybe one meal for you. Maybe your optimal TRE, at this point, looks like one meal a day. I know for me that's what it looks like. For me to keep myself at my optimal level, I do best with one meal a day. Some people do best with two meals a day, others with three meals a day. Okay?

[00:19:02] As far as food-- I don't think you asked me that, you asked about fasting, but as far as food, again, you don't want to develop any expressions of insulin resistance, so you want to stick to whole foods as much as possible - real foods, whole foods, avoid processed foods as much as you possibly can.

[00:19:19] And while we're at it, let's not forget about the terrible impact of stress, the terrible impact that stress can have on our health, our weight, and our biomarkers, okay? So stress, keeping stress at bay. You will always have stress, and we do have the ability (our body, of course, has the ability) to deal with stress, but we also have to have the ability and the knowledge and the awareness of how important it is to keep our cortisol down by learning and practicing cortisol-lowering techniques every single day and by looking at our sleep and improving and maintaining really good sleep hygiene.

[00:19:57] All right. Back to you, Megan.

Megan [00:20:00] Okay. "Can fasting help you recover from mycotoxin issues?"

[00:20:05] So mycotoxin is essentially mold toxicity. Mycotoxins - you can sometimes see it as a black mold around your house, but it can also be airborne mold that you can't see with the naked eye, and it usually makes people feel very, very unwell. I took this question today because I suffered from mycotoxin issues as well, in the past. And yes, fasting can definitely help. It helps bring down inflammation. There is an insulin response when you do have mycotoxin issues. It can aid in detoxification as well.

[00:20:46] A lot of individuals that are experts in mycotoxin do recommend water-only fasting. When I was recovering from mycotoxin issues, I had water with salt when I was doing my fasts. You'll find many reports online of individuals doing more extended fasting (say three, five, or seven days) with water and salt and magnesium to help. And they will do this probably quarterly throughout their recovery process. And in between, they will do some of the more therapeutic intermittent fasts, like the 36 or 40s that we do in our program.

[00:21:32] So actually very similar to weight-loss fasting strategy would be for the mycotoxin issues as well. Now, it's not the only thing that helps someone recover from mycotoxin issues (There are great books out there, like 'Mold Warriors', for example, is a great place to get started.), but it is a tool in the tool chest you can use to help.

[00:21:58] All right, Nadia, I'll throw it back over to you.

Nadia [00:22:00] All right. The last question for today is, "I have made great progress with weight loss and other hormonal markers related to my PCOS since I began fasting, but my facial hair hasn't improved at all. Does the hirsutism go away with hormonal stabilization, or should I get laser hair removal?"

[00:22:20] So, like you, I also struggled with PCOS (polycystic ovary syndrome), and one of the most common expressions of PCOS, in many women, is facial hair and body hair growth, due to the, as you said, abnormal hormones or increased expression of male hormones, increased expression of testosterone. Hirsutism is the technical term for this increased facial and body hair in women with hormonal concerns related to PCOS and other hormonal concerns. I personally did notice a tremendous improvement in my hirsutism, primarily in my body. I noticed that all over my body the hair did become much, much thinner. I didn't have as much of that coarse hair, for example, from my belly button to my pubic hair. The hair became very, very thin and very, very light, whereas once it was very coarse hair. On my face, I did notice a tremendous improvement as well, but, in all honesty and transparency, I personally did do laser hair removal on my face (so my upper lip and my chin) and also on my legs and other parts of my body.

[00:23:35] Now, you have to remember that not all of your facial hair is going to be due to PCOS. A lot of it is genetic. A lot of it has to do with your genetics, with your ethnicity. I personally realized that my coarse hair that I had on my body and some of the coarse hair that I had on my face had to do with my PCOS. But the fact that, you know, my mother also had more body hair, more facial hair, made it so that, genetically, I also have this. And it's not abnormal necessarily. It is completely normal that some women have more body hair, more facial hair than others. So that might be based on your genetics and your ethnicity, okay?

[00:24:21] What you will find, and hopefully have found already, is that with the reversal of the PCOS, hopefully with a complete reversal of PCOS, the more coarse, you know, the darker, more testosterone-like hair on your body and face - that becomes thinner and less prominent. But if you still find that you have a lot more facial hair than what you're comfortable with and you choose to go ahead and do some laser hair removal or any other type of esthetic hair removal-- I personally did. And again, that wasn't because of my PCOS, necessarily, but it was more because of my ethnicity.

[00:25:01] That's it for today, Megan.

Megan [00:25:02] All right, everyone. We'll be back next week with another episode of The Fasting Method podcast. Have a great day, and happy fasting.

Nadia [00:25:11] Bye, everyone.