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Megan [00:00:06] Hi, everyone, it's Megan Ramos and myself and my co-host, the wonderful Nadia Pateguana, are back here today for another Q&A episode where we answer your questions about fasting. Nadia, how are you doing today?

Nadia [00:00:21] I'm good, Megan. How are you?

Megan [00:00:23] I'm hanging in there. The beginning, the start of the New Year's is always so hectic. But I'm really excited for this episode because I love answering everyone's questions and we've received some good ones. So if you're out there listening and you have questions, you can send them into podcast@thefastingmethod.com, and Nadia and I will make sure to get to them during one of these episodes.

[00:00:47] But just a quick note. We can't give out medical advice. Unfortunately, we don't know your whole medical picture and we are just unable to answer those medical-related questions. But if you have a question about fasting, if you have a question about nutrition, we are so excited to answer those questions and get the right information out there.

[00:01:10] All right, Nadia, do you want to kick us off with question number one for today?

Nadia [00:01:14] Absolutely. And I love these Q&As, you know, how I love---I especially love because I love the opportunity to, of course, address some concerns, myths, whatnot, but I also love to have the opportunity to give my feedback and then listen to yours of the exact same question. So it's awesome.

[00:01:33] So I'll start with the first one, OK, Megan?

Megan [00:01:35] Sounds good.

Nadia [00:01:36] So the first question is on flavored coffee beans - I find that drinking black, regular, unflavored coffee is hard on my stomach as well as on my stamina, but I find it easier to drink black flavored coffee so that I don't have to add milk to it, which would be my preference. By flavored, I mean, the beans are flavored. The company (there's a company name) says that even their flavored coffees have only five calories in a cup of coffee. I do not add flavored syrups. Is it OK to drink flavored coffee or does it break my fast?

[00:02:14] Megan. I'm going to throw this one at you first. I think this is a very common question, not necessarily about flavored coffee, but flavored drinks in general. What are your thoughts on this?

Megan [00:02:25] I am not a coffee drinker, so there's actually a lot of good Q&A's here today that I definitely think Nadia is the ultimate expert for. But I will say I've had less than 10 cups of coffee in my 37.5 years on this planet. So I am no expert at all. I know I--- Sorry!

Nadia [00:02:48] All right, all right. I was trying to go easy on you guys. [Laughter] I was going to let you start off easy because we all know how I feel about flavored products. So if it's OK with you, Megan, I'm just going to go at it as I sit here sipping on my black coffee. So Megan decided to throw it back at me.

[00:03:05] You know, I'm very sort of direct with my approach to flavored products in general, OK? I think I've talked about it today already in a couple of my meetings with our clients in our Community. My concern is that we are in one of two states, right? And I mean, Jason says this all the time - Dr. Jason Fung. We're either in the fed state or the fasted state, and this is always a hormonal response. It's not a caloric response. So it's not about how many calories are in a particular food or drink or substance. It's really about whether or not it's going to have an insulin response.

[00:03:41] And so my concern with having flavored drinks, whether it's flavored coffee, flavored tea, flavored water, commercially flavored products is that we don't really know the processing all that well. And it's hard to say that it's all the same, but we do know that there is some biochemical processing that happens that creates these flavors and on the label, it just says natural flavors most of the time and whatever that means, OK? I have contacted a tea company once to ask them what that was, and I never got a straight answer. I've had some clients that are actually biochemists tell me that some of these labeled as 'natural flavors' are like an MSG type thing, which is just something to increase your appetite. In other words, to increase your insulin, so that you'll buy more of it and you'll enjoy it. So of course, you're going to enjoy a flavored, commercially flavored coffee more than you are going to enjoy a black coffee. And that's because there are these, likely these, components. And we don't really know what they are - usually, they just say 'natural flavors' - and that's in flavored coffee, flavored teas, flavored waters that raise your insulin so that you'll have more and more of it.

[00:04:57] What's the concern? And you will often say, "Well, it depends. Will it depend on how much? How often?" And of course, it all depends on many, many things. My concern is that, in between meals, I want to be in the fasted state. I don't want to be in the fed state, so I don't want to have any insulin signaling. And it's true that for some people, that signaling is going to be a little bit higher, so you're going to produce more insulin to certain things. As opposed to others who are going to produce less insulin.

[00:05:25] But my thought process here is that I keep all flavored things to my meals. So if I do want to have flavored water or if I want to have a flavored coffee or tea, it's something that I will choose to have within my meal, when I'm already having an insulin response. Outside of my meals, I stick to plain water, black coffee or black tea, and then all the different herbal teas. And that includes green tea, jasmine tea, mint, and even a combination of herbs. As long as there are no unknown sort of 'flavors' added there and weird names for flavors in the list of ingredients, just plain good old herbs. What do you think of that, Megan?

Megan [00:06:10] I 100% agree. So as the complete opposite of the coffee expert, I wasn't actually sure if it was different for coffee than it was for a lot of these sweetened, sparkling waters or some of these more commercial teas. So I'm even learning something here today. But in general, these quote-unquote 'natural flavors' tend just to be terrible. So like Nadia said, having insulinogenic properties, which were---I mean, the whole intention of fasting, the way that we do, is to suppress your insulin levels. So that's counterproductive.

[00:06:44] But there's also some other funky stuff in there. So like Nadia says, she reached out to a tea company. I once reached out to a water company asking them to explain quote-unquote 'natural flavors'. And I got no response, like they couldn't---well, that's not true. I got a response, but the response was no response, like they did not know how to respond to that question. So they didn't know how to access that. And then I was talking to someone who works for one of these companies. They said it's actually quite crazy what is

considered 'natural flavors'. And someone told me this, and I'm so sorry for everyone that's listening right now. I'm going to share something that's a little bit gross, so just tune out for the next 10 seconds if you don't want to hear it. But they said that a common thing that they use in 'natural flavors' to give sweetness is beaver anus! So apparently it's very sweet and is considered a 'natural flavor', and they don't have to list that because...

Nadia [00:07:47] What? [Laughter]

Megan [00:07:47] Yeah, right? So that was it! Like, the occasional sweetened fizzy water, or occasional tea, or not sweetened but containing these 'natural flavors'? Nuh-uh. That was it. I was done! [Laughs] But on that note, you've got to read the ingredients, like Nadia said.

[00:08:09] So I might not be a coffee expert, but I've got a hardcore tea addiction issue and there are some teas, some herbal teas, that do have a nice flavor to them, but it's not, quote-unquote 'natural flavors'. So when you look at the ingredients, if you see that 'natural flavor' ingredient, you should probably leave that out. But the other teas like a chocolate, pu-erh tea or a ginger, mint, decaf, green tea, so long as you know the ingredients and they are not all lumped under some secret terminology - 'natural flavors' - then it's pretty safe to have. And then you also want to check for natural sweeteners with a lot of these too, because you'll see things like stevia added in occasionally, and we know that can cause some insulin-related issues as well. So yeah, best to avoid some---maybe we can share some tips here, Nadia.

[00:09:06] Some of the clients that I've worked with over the years and Community members, who struggle with their black coffee. There's been a few hacks. So one of them was adding a pinch of salt to black coffee, and it really helps cut down on the bitterness. And one of the beautiful things about The Fasting Method Community is that we're a global community, so it's just really cool because not only do we get to support each other, through fasting and nutrition, we get to learn so much about fasting practices worldwide, and nutrition worldwide. And apparently, it's pretty common outside of North America to add salt to coffee to help cut down on the bitterness. I didn't realize that. And then once we started doing so much travel internationally for medical conferences, I actually saw it in action. So, you know, there's coffee shops in other places in the world, where when you go for your little stir sticks and the little garbage can to prep your coffee, they actually have salt containers. Whereas here in North America, you've got things like chocolate and all the sugar and stuff that you would add. So salt's been a really popular one. A lot of people provide feedback on that.

[00:10:17] And then cinnamon. Cinnamon can be super sweet tasting once you've been off sugar for a little bit. And a lot of people say that that helps with their tea and their coffee, and I will be the first to admit that's how I got off four teaspoons of sugar in a tea - was using cinnamon. So I would just take hot water and dump in a cinnamon stick. Then, you know, and in my tea. And it would actually get so sweet that I couldn't drink it after a few cups. So it can really help for those of us who gravitate towards coming off sweeteners more so than trying to come off some of the fats to add black tea.

[00:10:55] One thing---I had one patient from the clinic, when we had the clinic, and they would actually boil cinnamon sticks in water and then they would have the cinnamon water and then just leave it in their fridge. And they would use that. They would pour that into their coffee machines and they would just make coffee from that. And I thought that was pretty---it's an extra step (like dumping a cinnamon stick in is way easier). It's an extra

step, but if you do some preparation, it worked out really well. And then, of course, you know, when you go to coffee shops like the Starbucks of the world, they always have a cinnamon shaker. So it does get clumpy. It's not as palatable. Even when you stir it in, you know, it doesn't quite dissolve very nicely, or mix in very nicely, but it can still help if you're getting some coffee on the go.

Nadia [00:11:41] I love the idea of sharing some tips because I think we've gathered a few along the way, things that we do, things that our clients do. Definitely, the cinnamon one is a big one. In coffee shops here where I live, you get, a lot of times you get these cinnamon sticks instead of using sugar, and that's a super thing to do. When I switched from double-double - that was my coffee - I did do the salt trick and I can definitely tell you that I was amazed at how it took the bitterness away. And then eventually, of course, I got very used to and very addicted to the black coffee. Myself in the last few months, and I've shared this on social media quite a bit. I've actually switched from having coffee in the morning, first thing in the morning. Of course, this is a whole other conversation, maybe for another time. And it takes a few days to adapt to that. But the reason why I did that is for better adrenal health and a whole bunch of other things, better hydration. So now in the morning, and this is a tip specifically for this person, you don't have to drink black coffee if you don't like it. Have something else, right? Like, I take the opportunity in the morning---and yes, it takes you a few days to get used to not having a shot of caffeine first thing in the morning. But believe me, you might be surprised at how much better you feel.

[00:12:59] So in the morning, I actually drink water and a whole bunch of different teas; so I talked about my lemongrass tea, which is really nice - soothing and sweet. I make cinnamon and lemon peel tea right on the pot. As Megan was saying, I just boil the cinnamon sticks with a lemon peel. So these types of more soothing---I don't even have green tea or black tea first thing in the morning. I don't want that kick because that kick actually comes with a bit of a drop after. So I actually wait until a better sort of circadian rhythm to have my coffee, a little later. So between, I think, 11 am and 2 to 4 pm, I can have two or three black coffees. It's actually easier, as this person said, on your tummy if you have coffee with a meal as opposed to it on its own. So I have done so much better by just drinking water and these more soothing teas that are so nicely flavored on their own that they don't need any of this, whatever this stuff is. I won't even mention what you just said, Megan!

Megan [00:14:01] I know it's so, so gross. [Laughter] Sorry, everyone.

[00:14:07] Alright, I'll jump to the next question. I am actually---I'm going to skip the next one. Nadia is definitely the expert to chat about question number two on our list. I'm going to hop to number three - when you're feeling cold during your fast.

[00:14:21] Now, it's normal for people to feel a bit of coldness when they're fasting or when they're new to fasting. But this person who wrote in to us said that they get so cold during their fasts that it actually prevents them from continuing, so they end up breaking their fasts early on. And while I will say this is not common, it does definitely happen where people experience this extreme sort of coldness. I was actually one of those people. I thought, "Oh my goodness, like I am already---tend to be a little bit cold to begin with," with some mild, you know, a subclinical hypothyroidism that I struggled with and I thought, "Oh, geez, this is pretty terrible." And when I started fasting, I started fasting in August, September. I was in Toronto, so very hot months over there in Toronto, and I might be outside in a hooded sweatshirt and big wooly socks and really kind of feeling ridiculous where everyone's in tank tops and shorts. But then what happened? My body became so

efficient at burning body fat on my fasting days that by December, January, I was able to run out to my car in shorts and sandals and not even be bothered by the minus, you know, 40-degree weather that much.

[00:15:47] So it does happen and you do adapt with consistency. So more often than not, we just see the body struggle to actually get in that fat-fueling, fat-burning state on the fasting days. And this can lead us to feeling, sort of, even bone-chilling coldness. So what we've usually done with people is you've got to stay consistent or even force a bit of a longer fast. So if you've been constantly doing 24 hours, maybe try a 42 or 48, if your doctor is OK with that. Or even if you can do an extended fast, trying to do a couple of them, not necessarily back to back, but over a two-month period, you know, try doing maybe a three or five-day fast. And again, so long as your doctor is OK with it and you can do extended fasting.

[00:16:39] And this helps. This helps, especially the longer fasts, really force your body to have no choice but to start burning that body fat. And then once you start, well, you're going to heat up like a furnace. So often than not, people go from being too cold to too hot. But it's hard to navigate out of that cold window because you end up cutting your fasts a little bit shorter each time, and it makes you leery of doing another fast. So consistency doesn't always end up being there, and then that just perpetuates the problem. So stay consistent with your fasting protocol. Get through it. You know, add in the extra socks, add in the extra layers of T-shirts and sweaters, but stay consistent and maybe try doing a longer fast - either intermittent or extended - if your doctor's onboard.

[00:17:28] Every now and then, though, it tends to run beyond that. People experiencing sort of this bone-chilling coldness, and we know that they're burning plenty of body fat. We're seeing it. We're seeing them melt away, their bellies are melting away, or they're even measuring it. So they're using a device like a Biosense ketone breathalyzer or a Keto Mojo that checks ketone levels. And ketones are a fuel, a fat source fuel, that you can measure with these types of devices. And we can tell from the numbers that are reported, how deep a person may be into fat burning. So what our community of fasting experts and people who do follow more of a low-carbohydrate diet have discovered through our own working with patients and clients and then research, is that potentially there's some neurotransmitter deficiencies in some individuals that make them feel pretty cold.

[00:18:32] Now how do you address a neurotransmitter deficiency? That's not easy. You can't necessarily just go out and measure them with a simple test, but this particular neurotransmitter taking some coffee actually helps you increase it. So this kind of ties in nicely to the first question about coffee. So having some black coffee, whether it's cold or iced, even adding cinnamon to it, adding salt to it's not going to hinder the process, but it will help you boost some of that neurotransmitter, which can really help. I will say, though, that that is extremely, extremely rare, but I just want to put it out there that we do see it, but it is very rare.

[00:19:15] So in general, it's be consistent with the fast, push the fasts a little bit if you can, and that will help you just become a better fat burner. And almost always that will help obliterate those bone-chilling feelings that you're getting during your fast. Nadia, anything else you can think of?

Nadia [00:19:35] Yeah, that's super interesting. I never heard about that last part. I think this is super common; I think we all feel it at some point. It does seem to get better, but every time you do a little bit of a longer fast, that might happen again. So again, doing

more consistent fasts that your body will eventually get used to. I think it takes some time, right, for the body to adapt to burning fat, so you have to keep that in mind.

[00:19:56] There's a few tips I think that I've heard and shared along the way. Drinking coffee, but, yeah, hot liquid, hot tea. You know, just the warm socks, gloves, if you need to for the first few times. But one of the things that I think for sure, not only helps to warm you up, but it actually has more of a physiological impact in teaching your body how to actually use that fat that you're burning for fuel, is movement. And this is something that you see all the time. Like in my house, for example, there's four of us, right? Five, if we count our nanny, and seven if we count the two dogs! But the ones that tend to be movers - and that's definitely my husband, my little one, my youngest child, who's now eight - they are movers. They are always hot - their hands are hot, their feet are hot, they're just hot all the time. People like me that -[Laughs] the only part of my body that moves a lot is my mouth [Laughter] - tend to be cold all the time.

[00:20:58] So Megan, actually, I think, is the one that gave me this tip at some point. When I fast, sometimes, especially when I do a longer fast than what I'm used to, my ketones go very high. And even though they're not dangerously high, I mean, they go pretty high. And sometimes my blood sugars also drop. I mean, it sounds like a dream for some people, but it feels uncomfortable at times. And that's because since I don't do these long fasts all the time, I think that when I do them, I've got all these extra ketones, but then I don't---my body's not really utilizing it, and that's why I feel unwell. So at some point, I don't know if you remember this, Megan - you probably say this every day. But at some point, Megan was like, "Move around, you know, walk up and down the stairs, walk around the table, whatever." And then I check my ketones and my blood sugars and, of course, that's exactly what happens. Then all of a sudden my body used up some of that fuel. So I bet you, if you were to try that, it would definitely help. The movement would help with the fat utilization and it would warm you up.

Megan [00:21:57] Thanks, Nadia. Yeah, I was thinking, "I hope she says, 'movement,'" because I forgot that [Laughter] in my spiel. But moving will definitely help get the fat burning too and make you feel warm. That was always Jason's go-to in the clinic when a patient complained to him. Get up, get up, get moving! It all makes a difference. And walking is so underrated too - even a 30-minute walk can make a huge difference. So you don't need a gym membership, you don't need equipment, you don't need to take a class, you don't need special clothes. You can just literally throw on your shoes and even go for a leisurely walk. And it has a huge, huge metabolic impact in a very positive way.

[00:22:39] All right, Nadia. For the ladies out there - you are our hormonal health guru. This is a question that we're asked so much. And this is a question where---not even a question, but a place where a lot of women get so down on themselves because fasting seems so easy during some weeks and sometimes it seems almost impossible. So question number three - fasting and the menstrual cycle. I'll throw it over to you.

Nadia [00:23:08] Well, let me, as I said, my mouth moves a little too much! [Laughter]. So let me try to summarize this into a simple Q&A and not make a whole Hot Topic out of it because I have done presentations on these, livestreams on this topic for our Community. Every single Tuesday, I have a meeting for women and fasting and we talk about this. So again, I would love to give you more bits to this in another time, another place. But for today, we'll try to keep it as simple as possible.

[00:23:39] So for women that are in their reproductive years and have a menstrual cycle, I think that the more you know about it the better because a lot of times we feel so doom and gloom, but we actually need to celebrate our hormonal advantages. We think we're so disadvantaged, when it comes to hormones and in comparison to men, but that is just not true. I mean, if you look around you, any information that you can get your hands on, look at your family. Women tend to live longer than men; there's a hormonal advantage there. But we don't understand it and because we don't understand it, because we feel a certain way sometimes and other ways other times, we think that we are, you know, just doom and gloom. But we're not; we actually have a definite hormonal advantage. And so let's try to understand it as much as we can.

[00:24:22] So what Megan is alluding to is that, for those of us that have a menstrual cycle, it's pretty easy actually to map out a fasting schedule. So when you start your period, right, mark that is day one of your cycle. Put that on, either---I like to put it on a circle calendar, as opposed to a graph, as opposed to on your monthly calendar, just so you understand it better. So day one of your cycle is when your period starts, right? And then about halfway through your cycle is when most women, that are reproductive and are not taking medication to stop ovulation, about halfway through your cycle is when you ovulate. So let's say your cycle is regular and 28 days, about day 14 is when you ovulate and then at the end of 28 days, if you're regular - and you want to be regular, there's a lot to be said for having a regular menstrual cycle. It is a sure sign of health for younger women. So again, to be continued conversation.

[00:25:18] So then at the end of your cycle, your period comes again. What we know is that pre-ovulation - so the first half of your cycle - is estrogen dominant and post ovulation, it's progesterone dominant. These two hormones are important. And they not only have an impact on your insulin production, but your insulin production has an impact on these hormones as well. So it's beneficial to know how to fast for your menstrual cycle so that you have a better, sort of, more regular cycle. We see this with PCOS women all the time. You can totally take a woman with PCOS who hasn't had a cycle in over a year and get her to have a cycle within three months with proper intermittent fasting. We do this all the time and we talk about this in The PCOS Plan book that Jason and I wrote.

[00:26:00] So when is the easiest time of the month to fast and when is the safest time of the month to fast, for those of you, for example, trying to conceive? Once your period starts, it starts to get easier to fast. Day one might not be the easiest, and that's only because you're coming from the hardest time of the month to fast, which is the premenstrual week. So after day one, day two, day three, it starts to get a lot easier. Your insulin naturally starts to decrease; your insulin production naturally starts to decrease so fasting longer becomes easier. Making better food choices, as you know, becomes easier so you want to take advantage of this. Maybe you want to prep for an extended fast at this time of the month.

[00:26:38] So you can prep by doing some fat fasting, for example, and any of the other tips and tricks that we've taught you along the way. So you prep and then you do an extended fast - any time up until ovulation is a good time to do an extended fast and it will be the easiest time. Post ovulation, you may not want to do longer fasts, especially if you're trying to conceive. So for safety reasons, you don't know, right, if this is the month that you're going to get pregnant. So if you're actively trying to conceive, I advise that you then start looking at having rich, full, satiating meals and focusing on TRE (time restricted eating), as opposed to extended fasting or overnight fasts.

[00:27:17] If you're not trying to conceive and you're certain you're not going to conceive, if you have other methods to prevent that, or if you're just, you know, not having sex, then post-ovulation, you'll probably still be able to fast quite easily until about the premenstrual week. At that point our natural insulin resistance does go up; this is part of our cycle. So there's a half of the month where we lose weight very, very quickly and easily, if we put some lowering-insulin efforts into it, like fasting and better food choices. And the other half of the month, our body goes into more of a retention mode and we clearly feel this the week before a period. The more insulin resistant you are, the more you're going to feel this. So the more, maybe, weight you have to lose, the more PCOS you have, if you're more diabetic, you're definitely going to feel PMS more. The less insulin resistant you become, the easier your premenstrual week is going to be.

[00:28:14] So there's a lot to track here and to learn and understand. So then what do you do, when fasting is harder? Well, the cravings go up, the retention goes up, the weight goes up, all these things. And so you're not feeling great, you're not feeling like you look great. So it's really not, at times, it's not the best time of the month for women. But if you understand it, you can definitely, as I said, it can get a lot better. What you don't want to do in that week is you don't want to feed the insulin beast, right, because the insulin beast is going to start talking to you. Your cravings are going to be going up and, you know, you're likely going to start looking for healthier alternatives. So that's when you start looking for the sweeteners and maybe too much cream in your coffee outside of your meals. And you know, you start with that, but then you're feeding the insulin beast and then, all of a sudden, you find yourself eating things that you don't want to eat.

[00:29:04] So my solution to PMS is fat fasting, and that's what I was talking about. During premenstrual week, if you really focus on not feeding the insulin beast, if you really focus on lowering that already super high insulin level, once your period comes, you're going to be in a super great state to do another extended fast. And that's sort of how you do the cycle, over and over again.

[00:29:27] What you may hear out there is that fasting is bad for your reproductive hormones, and I battle this myth every single day. Fasting is good for women because it has a tremendous impact on regulating our hormones. And so most of the women that we work with have irregular hormones, insulin, and also their own reproductive hormones. As I just said, many of the women that we work with have PCOS and haven't even had a cycle for months on end, can't get pregnant or, you know, many other concerns. So fasting is good for women because it does help to balance your hormones. At some point, you might hear some other conversations, and I'll leave that for another time. But this idea that during the second half of your cycle, during your progesterone-dominant, to promote progesterone production, that you should have some carbs. And that's a different conversation for another time because we must, at first, decide what we're dealing with. If it's insulin resistance that we're dealing with, then our objective is to lower that insulin throughout your cycle. Once you feel like you've dealt with your insulin resistance, then you might want to look at some progesterone-promoting things, and we can leave that for another time. What do you think, Megan?

Megan [00:30:37] I think overall it was a great answer. I just want a couple of takeaways here. Ladies do not beat yourselves up. And there's something Nadia said about hormones, too, and it's so funny because I was having this conversation with my mother-in-law. We're great friends and my husband was so mortified, but she was starting bioidentical estradiol, so bioidentical estrogen. And I was like, "Oh, mama it's gonna make you feel so sexy and good." [Laughter] And my husband was like, "Oh gosh, like, I don't

want to hear that. Stop talking! Not about my mom." [Laughs] And then she laughed; it was really funny.

[00:31:15] But you gotta keep in mind that first phase of our cycle, our hormones are telling us that we are incredible - we're sexy, we're confident, we feel good, our mood is great - and it's suppressing our appetite. So we're fasting like a machine. The world is our oyster and we are crushing it! And then ovulation happens and progesterone doesn't necessarily make us feel good and it makes us feel tired. We feel a bit bloated. And then fasting is really difficult because it's an appetite-stimulating hormone. So, so many women feel like they're going from such a high high to a low low, but just understand this is normal. You know, evolution expects us to make a baby around ovulation and it's just getting ready for that, and part of that is increasing your appetite - eating leads to growth, conceiving is a period of growth time. So don't beat yourself up. And we find that, you know, Nadia and I explain this like every day. Like she said, knowledge is power. So if you know, you can plan around it.

[00:32:21] And for the guys out there who might have tuned out, tune back in now. If you have a female partner and her fasting style needs to change because maybe the first week of every month she does an extended fast, and the second week of every month she does like this intensive, intermittent-fasting protocol, and then the third week of her monthly cycle she's scaling back a bit, and that fourth week she's eating more but focusing on nutrients and time-restricted eating, not snacking. That's awesome variability. And any time - Jason, Nadia, myself, any of our other teammates - we always talk about, change it up, change it up, change it up. So for my guys out there who are in partnerships with females who are fasting with their cycles, follow it because it is just going to be golden to your weight loss and your metabolic success. And so many couples that I work with, when the husband gets on board, everybody's supporting the other person - the husband's not trying to fast a lot while the wife is trying to eat more, it keeps everybody's diets on track, and it creates amazing variability. So if you are in this type of partnership, it's one to take advantage of. Plan out together because then you're both going to succeed together. So it's a great strategy for changing things up and, again for women, don't beat yourself up over the variability in the month because that variability is golden.

[00:33:49] All right, I'm going to jump into our next question about changing fasting lengths. So all of these questions are flowing nicely today. The question is, "Since I'm not losing weight on the 16:8 fasts after two months, I want to start 24 hours of fasting. What will happen in, let's say, a year when I hopefully lose weight and get off some meds and go back to just 16:8? Will I regain the weight? Will 24 hours of fasting be a lifetime thing?".

[00:34:21] Well, this is a question to unpack. I actually just recently tackled a very similar question in our Fasting Method Community from one of our members. So, I've got good news and I've got bad news. First, let me start with the good news - that once you correct your insulin issues, once you lose the weight by correcting your insulin issues, then you are golden. If you practice good eating habits, good common sense - you're not snacking, you're not grazing all day long, you're doing that 16:8 lifestyle and eating, you know, real, whole nutrient-dense foods, and keeping sugars for just special occasions (if you have them at all) - you do not need to be in some sort of fasting prison sentence for the rest of your life. Many people actually find fasting eventually to be so easy that they do continue to do quite a handful of 24-hour fasts on a regular basis. But you will just be fine. A good maintenance strategy is sort of the 16:8 protocol.

[00:35:27] But, this is where I get into the bad news. 16:8 is a good maintenance protocol. It is not a good fasting protocol for weight loss. The reason why is we usually don't see those insulin levels start to come down until after that 24-hour mark. So while we are doing great work doing a 16:8 diet for preventing the insulin from getting worse, we are not doing a whole lot to make it better. And unless we do a strategy that's going to make it better, we're not going to be losing weight.

[00:36:04] So I'm not surprised that, after a couple of months of 16:8, you're really not seeing weight loss. Usually, people do see a bit at the beginning - it's mostly water loss from dropping their insulin somewhat - but it's not a good strategy for weight loss. At The Fasting Method in our clinic, when we had it, with our online-coaching clients, masterclasses, our Community it is just the maintenance protocol. So when we get into fat loss, we're really talking about doing a minimum of 24 hours, three times a week. And most of our members strive to do one of the following: 24 to 42-hour fasts, two to three times a week (three times, definitely, if they're doing the 24 protocol) or two 48-hour fasts a week. And there's a lot of people with families who are the primary cooks at home in their household, they're like doing two 48's because it's only two evenings a week that they're skipping dinner with their family, as compared to three evenings if they're doing like, say, on Monday, Wednesday, Friday, 36 or 42-hour fasts.

[00:37:10] I'm not sure, even with a 24-hour fast - it occasionally helps with fat loss, but because that insulin doesn't usually start to drop until around that 24-hour mark, depending on the severity of the insulin issues, most people find that they have to do, sort of, that 36, 42 or jump into the 48-hour protocol.

[00:37:31] The good news is, though, if you do it and you stick with it consistently, in a short period of time, you can get results that are totally out of this world. Nadia and I, our whole team, we see it day in and day out. Every single day when Jason and I started fasting patients in the clinic, I was totally mind-blown by how much progress people can make in such a short period of time, if they stick to a consistent therapeutic plan.

[00:37:58] So, first piece of advice - don't think of fasting as a diet. It's not. It's a treatment. It's a lifestyle, but it's not a diet. And when you think of treatments, you don't do treatments forever, right? You do them for a set period of time. But you've got to actually go to your treatments to get the results. So when you encourage people who are fasting for therapeutic reasons, for clinical reasons, that they need to treat it like a fasting therapy and they have to treat it like an appointment that they need to go to.

[00:38:31] And that was actually the attitude that I developed when I first started fasting. I was 27. I had metabolic conditions like PCOS and fatty liver disease. I had just gained a ton of weight and that weight gain thing came out of nowhere; it just sort of happened overnight. Well, that led to the development of type 2 diabetes. So I started fasting and it was tough, for a couple of weeks I could just barely get to those 16 hours. I was hanging on. Hour 16 to 18 felt like an entire year. But then, with consistent practice, it became easy. Just like going to the gym. You go to the gym, you start lifting weights - say you're doing bicep curls - and those 10-pound dumbbells sure weigh a lot. But if you keep going, it becomes easy and you move up to the 15 or 20 pounds. And that's what happens with fasting. So from there, I moved from 16:18 to 24, and, phew, that was tough. But after a month of doing that three times a day, it became so easy it was just mind-blowing how easy it became.

[00:39:40] And Nadia and I, our whole team, we've seen this happen thousands of times. People think that 24 hours is the hardest fast ever and then, in the matter of a few weeks, they're like, "This is so easy. Like, I can't believe I thought it was so hard." But we totally understand why you think it's hard. But trust us, with consistent practice, it becomes easy.

[00:40:02] And from there, you go up into doing some of the longer fasts. So you never have to force it, but you need to practice consistently and it will get easy. So after the first six weeks, I started doing a plan where, 90% of the time, I did two 42-hour fasts and one 24-hour fast a week because that fit my lifestyle and it was getting me great results. And the other 10% of the time, I did three 42s, or I did three 24s because life throws you curveballs, there's holidays, there's vacations, there's stress, there's poor sleep. Or maybe there's some really quiet, awesome weeks where you can get in more fasting.

[00:40:38] And within six months, I lost over 60 pounds. I continued to lose weight till I lost 86 pounds, but in that six months I lost 60 pounds and I reversed every single one of my illnesses. So you gotta treat it as a therapy. I know that, since the initial six-month period, I have never gone months of doing forty-two-hour fasts on a regular basis. I do here and there because I go on holidays, I travel, life gets hectic sometimes, so I'll do a few fasts therapeutically just to sort of tidy up my system. But it's not---you don't have to fast like this forever, especially if you are being mindful of the amount of processed and refined foods that you're consuming.

[00:41:22] All right, Nadia, that was my very long answer to that question. [Laughs] Do you have anything else?

Nadia [00:41:27] Very long, but very good. I really like the idea that, of course this person realized on her own that she needed to move up to a longer fast for weight loss. And that's, I think, what we've learned along the way and so I appreciate your answer because if people knew this right from the get-go, right, then they know what to expect. The journey might be a lot easier. Information is power, like you said in the last one.

[00:41:54] But I think that---I'm a big fan of this idea of, first of all, information, second of all, the step-by-step approach. It's exactly like you said, it's exactly like going to the gym. I don't go to the gym thinking that I'm going to be able to lift 500 pounds on my first day - that's just impossible. But yet I can look and I can see that there are people that do this consistently and so can lift whatever amount of weight that they are have trained their body to lift. And if they can do it, of course, I know I could do it too if I were to train as they do.

[00:42:25] And the same thing with fasting. It's the idea that your first goal, to get to the 16:8 is tremendously hard for some people, but it only takes a few days for it to get easy. And then to go from the 16:8 to the 24 seems so hard that first time, with the first day or second day, but then you can't get people to stop doing one meal a day because that's all they ever want to do. And we hear this all the time. So the fact that things get easier the more you do them, that's just human nature.

[00:42:54] The word 'hard', I think is the word of the day. In my meetings today, we kept talking about this because our Coach Terri - Terri Lance - she tells people, "You can do hard things." So just because something is hard doesn't mean you can't do it. You definitely can do it. You just have to know how to do it and why you're doing it. And of course, the bonus is that it gets easier and easier as you go. But I think it's another very human question, when people first start and things seem daunting, they want to know,

"How long is it going to take? How long do I have to do this? And am I going to have to do this for the rest of my life?" And really, when you look at it that way, it does seem very daunting. But we're here to tell you, and of course I agree with Megan, especially because if you're very consistent, if you build up (slowly take your time), build up with appropriate fasting aids as you see fit. And if you build up, and then if you're very consistent with your weight loss or, you know, diabetes reversal, PCOS reversal, we usually see great success in about three to four months. Look at how much weight Megan lost in that six-month period.

[00:43:58] And then, if you're very consistent and you reach your goal, then maintenance, of course, looks nothing like that because we're not suggesting that you're going to do alternate-day fasts and overnight fasts every single week for the rest of your life. Yeah, maybe you'll throw in once a quarter, once a month, whatever you see fit. Most people, after doing something like this consistently, want to do some fasting because they like how they feel, they like the benefits of it. So things change, remember that. Things change, and you can do hard things, and things get easier.

[00:44:31] That's what I got to add, Megan. [Laughs]

Megan [00:44:33] Thanks Nadia, and thanks to everybody who wrote in - such great questions. Again, if you've got them, we want to hear them, and we want to answer them on one of these episodes. So reach out to us at podcast@thefastingmethod.com.

[00:44:48] Now, if you like this podcast, let us know. We want you to subscribe to it. Give us a rating over at iTunes. Give us some comments. You know, we want to help make this podcast the best. And so every time you listen to it, you're getting the information that you want to hear about fasting because that's our whole mission here is to make sure we are getting you the information that you want. But we so value you listening, helping us along in this journey - it's so exciting and we're really happy that we can bring all of our clinical experience to you guys.

[00:45:25] All right, team, we'll see you next time. Happy fasting.