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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.

[00:00:13] This podcast is for educational purposes only, and it is not a substitute for professional care by a doctor or other qualified medical professional. You should always speak with your physician or other healthcare professionals before doing any fasting, changing your diet in any way, taking or adjusting any medications or supplements, or adopting any treatment plan for a health problem.

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[00:01:13] All right. And now we'll get started with today's episode. Hi, everyone. It's Megan Ramos here with another Q&A episode. These are my favorite because I get to answer your questions on fasting and nutrition. Now, I want to thank everybody for sending in such great questions. We've received a lot of them and they're all amazing. We want to make sure we have the opportunity to answer as many of them as possible. So for right now, as we work through the backlog, we're not currently accepting new questions. We're trying to answer the most popular questions first and also ones that are relevant to the current time. So, for example, we are heading into summer and holidays, travel, so we're going to be talking about some topics related to that, but we promise we will work through them, everyone, and we so appreciate your patience.

[00:02:19] I also do want to give myself a tiny plug. I've got a book coming out called The Essential Guide to Intermittent Fasting for Women. It is going to be available next Tuesday, June 6th, in North America, the UK, Australia, and throughout other outlets across the world. Now, I'm getting a ton of questions about different languages and Audible. We are not quite sure yet what other languages it will be published in. Right now, it's only going to be published in English, but we are keeping track of the requests and letting the publisher know. They have to work with other publishers across the world to translate it into other languages, so it takes time. Even The Obesity Code by Dr. Jason Fung is still actively being translated into more and more languages after all of these years. So hang in there with us. As for Audible, will it be available in Audible? I really hope so. I am a new author. This is my first solo book. Yes, I know I have coauthored Life in the Fasting Lane but, as a new author, it is a risky investment for my publisher to do an Audible version. They're expensive and very time-consuming, so they want to see what the demand is and how well the book does. And if it does great, then we will definitely get an Audible form down the road. So right now, my friends, you'll only be able to get it in print edition. So hang in there with us and keep letting us know. We will definitely let our publishers know what the demand is and, hopefully, get it to be as accessible as possible for listeners.

[00:04:18] Now, we dedicated a whole podcast a while ago to this book, so if you have questions about this book, how it differs from Dr. Jason Fung's book, my previous book, Life in the Fasting Lane, and other pieces of literature on women and fasting, I encourage you to go back and listen to our podcast episode number 77. My co-hosts, Dr. Terri Lance and Dr. Nadia Pateguana, interviewed me on the book and we covered all of these

particular topics. So check it out and, of course, let us know on social media if you have any additional questions.

[00:05:03] Now, I'm going to get started answering your questions about fasting. The first one is actually a question that came into our inbox a lot but is being actively discussed on many fasting platforms right now. "Is it okay to have some form of solid food when I fast?"

[00:05:27] Now, this particular question was referencing pickles but, recently, I've seen people ask about things like olives and different forms of protein when they're fasting. Now, the bottom line is anything we consume on our fasting day, outside of water, does temporarily take us out of the fasting state. So if there is some type of caloric consumption, our body will fuel off of those calories rather than our body-fat calories that we want it to fuel off of. And it's important to note that, even once we start our fasts, it does take several hours before we even start to transition into burning our own body fat. This is because we've got to use up the energy provided by the food that we consumed in our last meal or our last day of eating. A lot of people with insulin resistance don't actively start to burn body fat until around the 24-hour mark. That's why so many people with metabolic syndrome do fasts for a minimum of 24 hours a few times a week in order to achieve weight loss.

[00:06:43] So you do have to be conscious and think about what it is that you're having and how long you're fasting for and sort of what the reward/risk benefit is. So we do this risk analysis when I'm working with coaching clients or people in the Community about what you can or can't have during a fast. Generally, the shorter your fast is, the more close to water, herbal teas, black tea, and black coffee you should adhere to. The longer the fast is, the less problematic having a bit of fasting aids is going to be. So, in general, when people are doing the therapeutic intermittent fasts - 24, 36, 42, 48 - those popular protocols you hear us talking about so much, it's okay to have some coffee, some tea, a cup of broth, a little bit of fat in your tea or coffee if you really need it. Sometimes people don't like fat in their tea or coffee, so they'll just take a little bit like a teaspoon or a tablespoon here and there. That's generally okay, but you do need to be mindful during those shorter fasts.

[00:07:59] Now, sometimes when people are doing longer fasts, let's say five days, for example, and if they find on day three, when it can be that really tough transition day during extended fasting, that if they have something that's super salty-concentrated like a dill pickle, it often gives them a really big boost. So let's take a look at this five-day fast. They've made it, you know, 66 hours into the five-day fast. A ton of truly deep fasting is happening at this point. If they have something like a dill pickle that rehydrates them, it's really going to only take them out of the fasted state for, you know, less than an hour. It's almost negligible. Pickles are essentially solid water for the most part. So it's less than an hour, but they get this great boost. And if it makes them feel so much better that then they go on and they fast for like another 48, 50-plus hours of the fast and they reach their goal of five days, then it's so worthwhile to have it. The return on investment is significant. So they have gotten in a significant amount of fasting before, they're getting in a significant amount of fasting afterwards - I think that it's okay. Now, sometimes people don't like pickles. Dill pickles are my preferred thing, if you need this, because you should be taking it for the sodium hit. I do understand they're pretty concentrated. They can definitely help someone feel pretty good when they're not in the best shape. Sometimes people just really hate them. I totally get that. You know, pickles aren't for everybody, and they might want to have like three or four olives, like large green olives. That's also fine to do, too.

[00:10:00] I won't really get into, like, more heavy protein. Every now and then, you know, a client will tell me they have like a sliver (you know, it's like a quarter of an inch thick) of avocado, instead, with a bit of salt on it. That's fine. Sometimes taking in a bit of fat along with the salt helps our bodies absorb and retain the salt better. So that's okay too. Another strategy I'll use with coaching clients if they're really struggling with hydration is having like a teaspoon of C8/C10 MCT oil or extra virgin olive oil, and adding a bit of salt to that tablespoon just to get a boost. A little bit of fat can really help us retain the electrolytes.

[00:10:46] But we're talking longer fasts here. I'm really sort of looking at the risk/reward rate. If we're out of the fast for, you know, for an hour or two, okay. And how much into the fasting are we already done? How much more fasting are we going to be able to go if we do this? And, you know, I think if someone on day three of something like a five-day fast takes a bit of an edge that, you know, gets them through a really sticky spot and then they're able to go on for another two and a half days of fasting, I think that's a huge reward. There's so many more benefits. So that's what I think you really need to be looking at when you're trying to assess whether or not you should take something. The only solid thing I've actually ever had during an extended fast is I did try a dill pickle once and I've had some crushed ice chips with salt on it. That's been really helpful for me when I felt like I've actively needed to chew something and I'm not feeling too keen on having more regular water. But I do try to stay away more from protein sources, aside from the occasional cup of broth if I need it, during the fasts.

[00:12:01] So just things to keep in mind. There are a lot of questions, too (like on Facebook) that I'm seeing about having 500 calories a day of protein. I mean, that's not fasting if you're doing that every day. I wouldn't really advise that. Again, if you did have this one sticky day in a prolonged period of fasting and you let yourself out of the fast for a door of time like 4 hours and you get back into the fast and you go for another two and a half days or so, I think that's fine too.

[00:12:35] Now just remember, any time you feel unwell during your fast, you've got to stop. You've got to seek out medical attention, and always talk to your doctor or licensed healthcare provider about whether or not fasting is safe for you in the first place.

[00:12:50] All right. The next question is, "Is there a relationship between body temperature and glucose levels?"

[00:12:58] So this question is actually a few questions we received combined. So the questions that we received were, "I take a hot shower, my blood glucose levels go up," "I get into the hot tub or Jacuzzi and I see my blood sugar rise on my Dexcom CGM," "I do physical activity and my blood sugar levels go up," "I travel to a warmer climate and my blood sugar levels went up," "I started thyroid medication and my blood sugar levels went up." So this question encompasses all of that.

[00:13:34] Any time our body temperature does go up, our blood sugar level is going to go up a bit. Now, I really wanted to cover this particular question at this time because the weather is starting to get warmer. Even in California where I live and we're very fortunate it does not get too cold in our area, we are experiencing an extreme shift of higher temperatures. And when the temperature (your body temperature) goes up, regardless of what is driving it up, you are going to see your blood sugar levels increase. So taking a shower, hopping in a Jacuzzi, going for a walk, or even sitting outside when it is substantially warmer out, and starting thyroid medication.

[00:14:25] People with low thyroid function have terribly sluggish metabolic rates and, as a result, they are super cold all of the time, and their normal body temperature is actually a degree or two less than the average person with a normal functioning thyroid. So they'll start taking thyroid medication, their metabolism kicks up, which is a great thing, their body temperature increases. The combination of both of those, the metabolism picking up drives the body temperature up drives the glucose levels up a bit. So it's not uncommon in these scenarios to see our glucose go up some. In general, it's probably a good thing because it means our metabolism is more active and we're going to be burning more body fat.

[00:15:18] Having low, low, low blood sugar levels isn't always good. It's not always a sign of a healthy metabolism. Sometimes when people are doing extended fasting, they may have very low blood sugar levels, but they're producing a lot of ketones, a lot of free fatty acids and they're primarily fueling off of that. So we'll see some lower blood sugar levels and that's okay. But when you're doing the therapeutic intermittent fasts, you really shouldn't see these nose dives in your blood sugar levels. Most people should see blood sugar levels in the 70s and 80s, or for our friends outside the United States, you know, 3.5 to 5 is normal. Around 4.5 is optimal for more continuous eating throughout the week. So that is kind of what we expect and what is related to a healthy metabolic rate. So we don't want to have these obscenely low blood sugar levels cause it's a sign of a really slow metabolic rate. Heat raises metabolic rate and we see slightly higher blood sugar levels.

[00:16:29] Now, I was actually telling a client of mine this morning who is experiencing this herself, she's seen her blood sugar levels increase, on average, about eight milligrams per deciliter, you know, half a millimole per liter with a very sudden shift on warmer days. And this is exactly what we saw in our clinic in Toronto. Toronto can go from very cold temperatures to very hot and humid temperatures in the summertime. We start to see some nice hot days coming in in May and continuing through October in some good seasons. Usually, from May till the end of June, we do see these blood glucose levels that are a little bit higher than normal. So, you know, anywhere from about 8 or 9 to about 18, 20 points higher or half a millimole to a full millimole higher. And then usually by July or August, things tend to settle down and the glucose comes down a bit and it stays down for the rest of the summer. So sometimes our bodies just need to acclimate, as well, to the change in temperature.

[00:17:41] When we do something like have a hot shower or sit in the hot tub, it's only short-term. When we have seasonal changes, it's long-term so our bodies will acclimate. So it's not going to last for the whole summer, but it's to be expected. It's to be expected every year. This pregnant lady is wearing a CGM because I'm so fascinated at the changes and the lowering in my own blood sugar level as a pregnant lady. It's definitely gone down, and it was already pretty low to begin with, but that is a side effect of pregnancy. But even with the warmer temperatures here, I'm seeing it go back up to more of my normal glucose levels. So it's just super fascinating and it happens to even the most insulin-sensitive people out there as well. So nothing is wrong, everyone. This is normal. Body temperature goes up, metabolism goes up, glucose goes up a bit.

[00:18:39] The next question asks, "What are your thoughts on Ozempic and medications like it?" So the GLP-1s that you inject into your tummy. Some of them, like Saxenda and Victoza, you inject daily. Other ones, like Ozempic and Mounjaro, you inject once a week.

[00:19:01] What are our thoughts on this? Well, we definitely prescribed it in the clinic. Some people experienced severe nausea in response to it, but most people found that it just cut the edge on their appetite a little bit. It made it just a little bit easier for them to fast.

In general, though, it proved to be pretty decent at lowering blood sugar levels. I've told so many of our Fasting Method Community members this. You know, at the start of COVID, it was super scary for a lot of people. You know, the whole world suddenly locked down. A lot of people were leaning into food because their whole lives had been turned upside down.

[00:19:47] And my own father struggled a bit with this. He had been doing such a great job with fasting and nutrition. He was not on any medications for blood sugar and was even seeing some really good numbers. But my dad, like so many people out there, really struggled during lockdown. He is in Canada and the lockdown there was super intense compared to a lot of places in North America and the rest of the world, so his blood sugar levels did go up. And Jason spoke to me and said, "Hey, you know, your dad probably could benefit from something until we kind of navigate, you know, what COVID is going to look like for everyone and what it's going to look like long term, and so he has a chance to adapt. But what do you want me to give him in the meantime?" And I told Jason, "Let's give him Ozempic. He only has to take it once a week. People don't seem to be as nauseous on it as the daily injectables, like Victoza, and I do think it's good at lowering his blood sugar level." Based on all my clinical experience, I saw it take the edge off of appetite for some people so I thought it might help with him for that. And then, of course, you know, we all acclimated to what was the 'new normal' at the time, and he got back into his fasting and eating routine and didn't need the medication long-term. So that was the boat so many people were in. And that was my own professional recommendation, you know, to his doctor when it was time for him to need something. That was my preference.

[00:21:25] Have I seen it be a miracle drug? Absolutely not. If I had a quarter for every time throughout the day I heard someone tell me that they must be the anomaly, that it's not been a miracle for them, they have not lost weight on it, they have not seen crazy blood sugar level improvements on it. If I had a quarter, we would all be fasting on a Hawaiian island now together in a big free retreat [laughs] but that is just not the case. I have never seen it be a miracle for anybody. And I do have a couple of celebrity clients who the media has just branded as someone who's achieved their weight-loss results from taking these injectables. And I can tell you they're not. It's just really kind of weird. You know, you see people, they're envious of them and their success. They're working really hard behind the scenes. Some of them are even very vocal about fasting, one of them in particular, and the ketogenic diet but, you know, there are still thoughts out there about them taking these medications. So we've never, ever seen it show these groundbreaking results. You've got to do the fasting, you've got to do the eating and the lifestyle changes to really reverse the condition.

[00:22:52] Now, people who do take these medications, who find that it does give them a bit of an edge, and they are able to fast consistently and work on their diet and other lifestyle factors, like reducing stress and improving physical activity, they experience great results. But I'll tell you, they don't experience that much better or faster rates of results than people who are just fasting consistently and working on the lifestyle factors. So I don't find that if you take these injectables, you're going to get a ton more results at a more rapid pace than if you're just doing these lifestyle interventions. I haven't seen that in our client population or in our patient population in Toronto, but there have been enough reports of it taking the edge off of their appetite. Some people don't notice it at all and, honestly, if there are behavioral or emotional changes (like stress eating, emotional eating, working through trauma by leaning into foods), it does not matter. You need to work on those things. This is why Terri is the most busy person at The Fasting Method. You need to work on those things. There's no miracle drug or injectable. So that is my clinical

observations from our Fasting Method population, my thoughts on it, you know, sort of my personal thoughts on it with my father's case. So that is where I stand when it comes to these particular medications.

[00:24:32] Every now and then a client will ask me and I'll say, "Of course, you've got to listen to your doctor and their recommendations but, you know, I have seen it take the edge off for some people. If it doesn't take the edge off and your doctor doesn't say you need to continue it, then you know, it might not be worth it if you don't have the insurance coverage for it."

[00:24:53] All right. The next question is, "What are your best tips for being successful with your fasts during the summer months?"

[00:25:01] A piece of advice that I gave to a client just this morning is a paper calendar. Old school, everybody, old-school staff here. Get a calendar. This is just dedicated to your eating and fasting schedule. Once a week, when you've got 10, 15 minutes and you're just drinking your coffee or your tea in peace in the morning, pull out your Google Outlook or iCals and look at your social or work schedule. And on that paper calendar, write in the meals that you need to eat and then actively write in the meals that you're going to fast for. So if you've got a Tuesday dinner with friends, but nothing on the Monday or the Tuesday into dinner, you could do a 42 and break your fast at lunch on Tuesday. And you can do a 48 - it just depends on how your tummy responds to ending the fast. You could break your fast at dinner with your friend, but actively write it in the calendar. There's so much scientific data that shows when we use actual paper and pen and write, we make a strong commitment to ourselves to attain those goals. So when we just are mentally thinking, "I'm going to do, say, three 42s or two 48s," and we get all these invitations in the summertime, it's not as easy to commit to that mental calendar as it is if we write it. So there's tons and tons of data. Like, if you write out your goals or your plans, you're so much more likely to follow through with them. Make the same commitment.

[00:26:48] I've done this. I did this from the start. I've always found that that pen-to-paper connection really makes a strong commitment for myself. So I got one of those old-school calendars. I got a little magnetic hook to hang it on the fridge, and that's just where it is. And in the summertime, when I'm compelled to eat later because the day is super long, with the sun being out now until like 9 or 10 pm, or social things come up, or even if I'm just stressed and kind of want to stress eat, you know, it's right there blocking me, reminding me of the commitment that I've made. So it's been a really great deterrent for me.

[00:27:30] I've used this countless times, thousands of times with clients over the years, and it makes a big difference. It sounds silly, but it really does solidify the commitment to the plan that you intend to do. So I highly recommend that as a summertime fasting strategy. As we've talked about quite a lot on this podcast and in our Community, you can't always fit into a particular fasting box throughout the summertime. You might have to combine a whole list of different therapeutic fasts within one week to meet your goals, and that's okay. You don't have to stay in a box like two 48s or three 42s. You can absolutely mix it up to stay consistent. So that calendar will definitely help you make a commitment, but navigate the complexities of your schedule. A lot of times with clients, too, we even work on their schedule week-by-week around their busy work schedule and social and family commitments.

[00:28:34] Another thing with being successful in the summertime is trying to find beverages in the evening you can consume on the patio that don't break your fasts. So here are three of my top ones for this particular time. If you're on your neighbor's patio, your back patio, or a restaurant patio, this is what you can do. I always carry around packets of herbal teas. Now, I do have Pique tea. I don't have any relationship with Pique Tea (Jason does, independent from The Fasting Method), but I just really like their product. I also like that they just come in packages that are powdered and easily stir into things, so I don't have to deal with the whole tea bag component, and they very quickly dissolve into the water and saturate the water with good flavor. So I'll carry around like hibiscus or mint, for example. And this way if I'm at a restaurant, I can just pull it out of my bag and I can put it in any iced water or carbonated water that is being served. And I've got this fun, fruity, flavorful beverage and, like, hibiscus tea is bright pink - it's super fun in the summertime. And a lot of our friends or people that we are hanging out with, they don't even notice I'm not drinking a cocktail or wine with them. So hibiscus is definitely a go-to for me on my end - great little packet. They even taste super fun in carbonated water. I really enjoy it. Throw in some fresh lime juice and, voilà, you've got this really cool-looking drink. Your friends think you're participating, you feel like you're having something special, and you're absolutely maintaining the integrity of your fast.

[00:30:26] Now, another couple of things that you can find more readily available these days. One is hops water. So it's just carbonated water with organic hops in it. Now, do always check the label to make sure they don't have added sugar. Sometimes they do. More often than not, they don't. But hops water is great. You know, we find it at tons of gastropubs and restaurants around here. My husband is a 34-year-old male who does not drink alcohol at all, but he does work out of the home with a bunch of people. They'll go out after work for some socializing and whatnot, and he can easily find hops water at most places as an alcohol-free alternative. He's drinking out of a can, it looks like what other people are having, and it's 100% fasting-approved.

[00:31:23] Something else too that you can do is find a good shrub at a restaurant. So shrubs are essentially a little bit of fermented fruit in apple cider vinegar. And at restaurants, they'll often add soda to it, or juice and alcohol to make it very flavorful. What we do when we go out or when we travel is we just ask for no juice, no soda, no liquor. So we just get carbonated water and the shrub. And my husband's actually bought a lot of shrubs. You can buy them online, we can get them at artisan markets, and he has them at home and he'll have them in carbonated water when we have friends over and doesn't feel like he is missing out. And even as a pregnant lady, it is something that I can do and it's totally, totally fasting friendly. It's just like adding apple cider vinegar into your water.

[00:32:20] So these are great things to do. Liquid calories can come in really fast in the summertime. They usually happen late at night. This is a problem for a lot of people, so leaning into some of these strategies can really help you stick to your plan.

[00:32:38] Question number five: "Do I need to eat ketogenically before starting a long fast?"

[00:32:46] We've seen this question come in in a variety of ways, long fasts being someone going from 16 to 36 hours, or long fasts being someone going from 36 hours to seven days of fasting. No, you don't need to eat ketogenically for a day, a weekend, a week before starting a long fast. In fact, a lot of the patients in our clinic didn't eat ketogenically. They just tried to eat less processed and refined foods, but not many of them were interested in a ketogenic dietary approach back in those days. We had

tremendous success with fasting and just a general real-food-forward approach with eating - so lots of therapeutic fasting, good non-snacking, time-restricted eating, and real foods - and people had a tremendous amount of success. That was our patient demographic at the time.

[00:33:44] What I wouldn't recommend is coming off of a bit of a sugar or processed foods weekend or event and then getting into a longer fast, especially an extended fast. The reason why is, you know, when we consume a lot of refined and processed sugars in foods, we do retain a ton of water. We're going to lose that water very quickly when we get into fasts and we can feel pretty dehydrated and awful. So what I encourage people to do is to fat fast in those cases. Don't beat yourselves up, we're all human. I have also suffered from the one-last syndrome in the past. I know what it's like, so it's better to take two or three days to fat fast before doing a longer fast if you are coming off of a period of time or a day of not the best eating. If you've had a little bit of something, say a little bit of potato or you had a piece of bread at a restaurant, I mean, that is not going to throw you off substantially and you can get back to your regular fasting routine.

[00:34:53] And the last question: "Does fasting help our bodies adjust to time zone changes?"

[00:35:00] With a lot of people gearing up for travel, this is a common and hot topic these days. But, yes, fasting can definitely help our body adapt to different time zones. In fact, when we eat largely dictates our circadian rhythm in the first place, and sometimes doing a bit of an extended fast can just make it easier to acclimate to changes in time zones, especially when you're traveling east many time zones. This is something I would often do. I spent a lot of time in the UK and Europe for work leading up to the pandemic. Not so much-- everything's online now, but before then, we would actually travel in person and have events, and I would do extended fasts. I would typically fast my travel day. Then once I get there at noon local time, I would have my biggest meal of the day. When we have our biggest meal of the day, it really can help set the tone of our circadian rhythm shifting. And our circadian rhythm does prefer to have that large meal at lunchtime - midday. So I'll make sure that we do have a really good lunch midday when we get there. That's how I'll break my fast and it can really help just take the edge off of things and acclimate. Of course, there are different strategies, too, like going to bed earlier, waking up earlier if you're traveling east, or vice versa if you're traveling west. That can be helpful and we will actually be traveling west-- well, we'll be traveling west during this podcast release, actually, and we're starting to go to bed a little bit later and wake up a little bit later to help ourselves acclimate now.

[00:36:50] All right, everyone, thank you again so much for the great questions. We appreciate your patience and we'll see you back here next week with another episode of The Fasting Method podcast. Bye for now, everyone.