

The Fasting Method #152 - Fasting Q&A with Megan Ramos: Hair Thinning, Plateaus, Caffeine Sensitivity, Digestion Speed, and Keto Breath

[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 to 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.

[00:00:42] The use of any other products or services purchased by you as a result of this podcast does not create a healthcare provider-patient relationship between you and any of the experts affiliated with this podcast. Any information and statements regarding dietary supplements have not been evaluated by the Food and Drug Administration and are not intended to diagnose, treat, cure, or prevent any disease.

[00:01:13] All right, and now we'll get started with today's episode. Hi everyone. It's Megan Ramos here with another episode of The Fasting Method podcast. In today's episode, I'm going to be answering your questions. Now, you can submit a question by going to our show notes. There is a Google Form link where you can fill out a survey letting us know what you want to know from me during one of these episodes. Our team goes through them every month and sends me a list of questions to tackle, and then we start fresh for the next month. So head on over, fill out that form, let us know what you want to know. Now let's get started.

[00:01:55] Question number one says, "I have just started fasting and I'm struggling to extend my fasts to 36 hours as I have two small children and we eat dinner together every day. Any tips?" From Kristin in Germany. That's very cool! It's so neat to hear we have listeners from all over the world.

[00:02:15] All right, tips for this. It is tough, especially when the kids are small. There's lots of food mess, there's lots of food left over, and it can be a time where it's really easy for parents to graze, and perhaps graze on food that they wouldn't normally graze on. Actually, Jason once told me that the only time in his life that he actually really struggled with a bit of weight gain was when his kids were small. It just makes it really easy to snack with all those little food items lying around.

[00:02:46] Something that I recommend to parents at this particular time of day is two strategies. Number one is we really want to minimize stress going into dinner time. So even if you're commuting home from work, just sitting in your car, once you park, and taking a few deep breaths, big diaphragm belly breaths. I encourage people to breathe in for four, hold your breath for a count of seven, and then exhale really slowly for eight. And do this a good three or four times. Lowering our cortisol, especially at a time of day when our body's actually a little bit depleted and struggling, can really help suppress your appetite going into the home and trying to fast while the family is eating dinner. So we want to try to lower that stress. Other things that parents have had a lot of success with is stopping off at the gym, quickly walking around the block, calling a friend, listening to a comedy show or a comedy podcast on your drive home. Anything that really helps lower

the stress is going to lower the appetite and make it easier to get through those family meals.

[00:04:01] Now, something that you can do at the meal to trick your brain is to have something like bone broth in a bowl and eat it with a spoon. A lot of parents actually do this because they're not 100% comfortable with their kids seeing them fast and skip meals. We all have our own reasons, and this strategy can often help, especially when kids are really young because they don't necessarily understand. And young kids tend to eat a bit different than what their parents eat anyways, so they just think, "Oh, hey, mom and dad are having soup this evening." But when you actually have a bowl in front of you and you're using a utensil like a spoon, and you have that action of putting the spoon in the bowl, picking up a food item and putting it in your mouth, it can really trick your brain into thinking you are participating in that family meal, and it helps keep your hands from diving into other things that might be on the table.

[00:04:58] So, one, we want to try to lower stress any way we can. Now, if you're at home with your kids, this is tough. I'm currently at home with my little guy, and I'm lucky if I get five minutes to brush my teeth every day. My husband actually takes a day off so I can record things like this podcast. It's tough. I hear it for you parents and guardians who are at home with your kids, but even just going into the bathroom or while your kids are playing, just doing that four-seven-eight breathing a few times can really help. So we want to do that, and then we want to try to trick our brain by having that bowl and eating with a spoon. Something else that often helps is if you cut some fresh herbs and put them on top of the broth. That greenness then really can trick your brain and add different flavors, too, that make you feel like you're having a meal.

[00:05:48] And then having different appetite suppressants along with that particular meal. So something I would recommend would be some sparkling water. You could add some lemon or lime. You can have a bit of lemon and lime when you're fasting; it really doesn't interfere with the fast at all and it adds flavor. And you could have something like mint tea, which is a great appetite suppressant. So the sparkling water, the mint tea - good appetite suppressants. So you're tricking your brain, you're adding in different flavors, you're adding an appetite suppressants. It is one way to help get you through that meal.

[00:06:23] So I hope that this helps. In general, though, my best advice to parents is to do two 48s versus three 36s, unless you've been told by your fasting coach or healthcare provider that you need to cap things at 36 hours. I was actually giving a masterclass lesson the other day and I talked about, you know, why women who are perimenopausal should really try to do the 36 hours and how it relates to protein needs on your eating days. So there's a time and a place to do 36, but if you've not been told you need to do 36, then I prefer families to do two 48-hour fasts a week because then you're only missing dinner twice a week versus three times a week when you're doing the three 36s. It definitely cuts things down drastically. And if your family is going to be eating leftovers because you're struggling to get food cooking, then it's only two nights of the week where the family is having leftovers, or it's only two nights of the week while you're navigating food prep earlier in the day, or food prep for those two meals, or you're actually trying to prep food while you're fasting. So two 48s if you can do it often works a lot better for parents, then three 36s.

[00:07:38] The next question says, "I do intermittent fasting five days a week, a 36-hour fast and no fasting the other two days. I feel fantastic and the weight is coming off. However, my hair recently started thinning. I've heard this could be because fasting is a

stressor to the body. I also work out three to four times a week and have two jobs, one of which is pretty stressful and high pressure. Is the weekly 36-hour fast too much for me?" This is from Jane from Manchester.

[00:08:07] Well, Jane, I would take a look and see how much protein you're actually having on your eating days, not your fasting days, those 36 hours you're not getting any food. But on your eating days, when you're having those three meals, are you getting 35-45g of protein at each meal? Getting in 35-45g of protein at each meal helps support your thyroid function, helps support sex hormone production. So often when women are experiencing some hair thinning, they're usually feeling it in their thyroid. Their body's usually a little bit stressed because they're not getting adequate protein. And, often, we can rectify this by making sure that they are getting in adequate protein on their eating days. So you want to make sure that, at each meal, when you're doing three meals a day, you're getting about 35-45g of protein. People often ask me, if they're an omnivore, should they count plant protein? You don't have to count it. It's bonus protein. You can keep things really simple. Use an app - Cronometer, MyFitnessPal, Carb Manager - and just focus on your protein and really trying to up your protein.

[00:09:19] I'd also recommend doing some micronutrient testing because nutrient deficiencies can also impact our thyroid function. Nutrient deficiencies can also result in hair thinning as well, so getting those things checked out. Of course, you know, you should always stop fasting until you get these labs sorted out, but I would take a look at your protein, seeing where it's sitting. I was telling people (again in a masterclass lesson the other day) that, of all my coaching last year, only one woman was getting in adequate protein. So, of all the women I worked with last year one-on-one, only one was getting in adequate protein on their eating days. So when you're working with me and I'm your coach and I ask you to track your macros, it's not because I think you have hidden carbs in there or you don't understand what is a carb. Almost always it's because I suspect that the protein is not enough, and that's why we're struggling with fasting, we're struggling with losing weight, we're struggling with a lot of these side effects, like sleeping issues and hair thinning. You gotta take a look at the protein. And if you are struggling with something like this that indicates that protein might not be there, this is where I love a 36-hour fast. It gives you three meals, three opportunities to get protein.

[00:10:41] Now, when we have a meal, we just can't sit down always and eat 50, 60g of protein. Our body can't necessarily utilize all that protein, so it will get converted to glucose via gluconeogenesis. So for a lot of women, what I really recommend is having those three meals, targeting that 30-45g of protein per meal. Now, if you're out there and you're having two meals a day, then you can tackle 45-50g, but I really try to not exceed 50g. Now, I tell people not to stress about this. If you're at the most incredible steak house and you have this to-die-for tomahawk or ribeye and it's just huge and you go to town, that's fine. It will spike your insulin a little bit, new glucose, that's okay for the odd time, for sure. Enjoy those meals. But on your regular day-to-day, you do need to be mindful of how much you're having. You want to make sure you're getting enough. You just want to make sure you're getting too much at once. So 35-45g when you're having three meals a day, 45-50g when you're having two meals a day. If you're just having one meal (say you're ending a 48 or maybe a 24), then 45-50g usually works pretty well, too.

[00:11:56] So, Jane, evaluate your protein levels, get some micronutrient testing, and see what areas there you might need improvement with. If everything looks well, you know, this might be a time to sync up with a fasting coach if you're not sure how to get much protein,

or how to structure it, too. Working with someone over at The Fasting Method can help you figure that out.

[00:12:20] All right. The next question comes from Antonella in Canada. She says, "I've progressed to doing three 42-hour fasts over three months, and the non-scale victories and systemic healing has been miraculous. But I have not seen weight or body fat decrease over the last four weeks after a 25-pound loss in the first few months. Is a plateau this long normal?"

[00:12:48] What I usually tell people is, if you haven't seen things shift in about two weeks, you should suspect that you are in a plateau. What I love about what Antonella has said here is that she didn't just say 'weight', she said 'body-fat percentage'. So sometimes the weight on the scale doesn't change and we are actually losing like a ton of fat. So it's important to know your body fat. But what Antonella is saying here is that she has looked at both metrics and the body fat hasn't changed over a month. So, in my mind, that is definitely a plateau and this would be something where you would want to change it up. So if you could pivot to doing two 48-hour fasts a week, that's where I would usually send people. Now, your feedback, often, is, "But, hey, Megan, two 48-hour fasts a week is less fasting than three 42s." Yes, it is, but, in each fast, you're getting an extra six hours in a deeper fat-burning state for a total of 12 hours in a deeper fat-burning state at the end of every week. So you're doing less fasting, but you are getting more bang for your buck with that. So, often, just pivoting to this particular strategy, from doing the three 42s to the two 48s, is enough to break through the plateau. Sometimes we do find we might need to bust out a 72-hour fast or a five-day fast. Of course, you always have to get permission from your healthcare team before doing any of these fasts, and we do recommend working with someone who is fasting savvy to help support you through these fasts. But often, doing something a little bit longer can break through that plateau.

[00:14:37] I'm not quite sure what Antonella's fasting fluids look like, but you might want to take a look at things. Am I having heavy cream in my tea or coffee? How much of that am I having? Are there any training wheels that I could decrease or just save for when I could really use them? And then we can always take a look at the eating days, too. Have we eliminated snacking? Are we back to just having meals every day? How are we consuming things like dairy and nuts? Are we consuming them like garnishes at our meals or are we consuming them like side dishes at our meals? Are we getting in enough protein when we are having eating days? So there are things you can take a look at on your eating days that can often help bust through a plateau, as well, if you're unable to fast more. So sometimes people say, "Hey, Megan, I want to keep going with the three 42s. How can I keep going with the three 42s?" We take a look at those fasting training wheels and drop what we don't need, or just really reserve them for those times in the fast when we need them. We take a look at the eating days and we see where we can clean that up. Again, that's usually no snacking, making sure we're using nuts and dairy as garnishes only, or perhaps cutting them out for a month just to help get the ball rolling again. Really important to get the ball rolling again, sometimes, is to cut out those nuts and that dairy, even when we're not using too much of it. But if we're still using it regularly, it can make a big difference. And then last but not least, making sure we are getting in adequate protein.

[00:16:12] Carey from Upstate New York is asking, "Would you recommend leaning heavily into fat fasting when initially trying to establish a pattern of therapeutic fasting? I'm finding it easier to do longer fasts, which are 24 hours or longer when I fast beforehand, but I have some concern that this could have long-term implications, and it almost seems like dieting."

[00:16:36] All right, so, with fat fasting, you can use fat fasting for as long as you are comfortable using fat fasting, or until you get the desired effects of fat fasting. Now, if you're worried about long-term implications of doing fat fasting, you could pivot here and just do a low-carb or ketogenic diet. So what's the difference between low-carb and keto and fat fasting? Well, fat fasting is a very monotonous diet. You're only eating one or two meals on repeat, or just a couple of foods on repeat. The idea of a fat fast is a really, really monotonous diet. So, if you're worried about that, you could flip to low carb or keto. And there's different ways to do it. There's ketogenic which is very low carb, there's moderate low carb, and there's liberal low carb. So, ketogenic's usually defined as less than 20g of carbs, moderate's less than 50g of carbs, and liberal's less than 100g of carbs. So usually, almost everyone can pick one of those buckets and fit into it without feeling like they're being too restrictive. So it just depends on where you're starting from, but even going liberal low carb can make an impact and can make it easier to do longer fasts. So that's something that I would take a look at if you're nervous about doing the fat fast. If you are nervous about doing the fat fast and, you know, it leading to an unhealthy dieting mindset, like you've noted in your message, then I would really just maybe do liberal low carb and see if just cutting out the excess carbs and starches and processed and refined foods helps make fasting easier. It should, and it absolutely can.

[00:18:24] I mean, we work with all kinds of people who have all kinds of diets, and, back when we had our clinic in Toronto, a lot of people did not even follow a low-carb diet, they would just fast. It was a complicated situation for a lot of individuals. We had a very diverse patient population, and that included a lot of socioeconomic diversity and health-status diversity. So people sometimes were happy to stay on the standard North American diet and we would still have them do therapeutic fasting and they got great results. Would they get optimal results? Would it decrease all of their risk of severe health complications long term? No, but we could usually get them off of insulin and get them to lose a significant amount of weight still. So what you eat matters. The fasting can still help significantly, and people still get good results and are able to fast, even on a standard North American diet, just fine, but any improvement to the diet helps enhance that. So maybe something like paleo, or a mediterranean-paleo diet, or just even keeping things liberal low carb might help you not necessarily feel like you're being so restrictive and getting into that diet mindset.

[00:19:38] If you are interested in our Fasting Method Community, Dr. Terri Lance, who's one of my fabulous co-hosts on this podcast, she's our resident behavior specialist. And in our Community, she hosts three meetings a week on healthy mindset, healthy habits, and healthy emotions when it comes to eating. And this is for all members to attend. Everybody gets access to this every single week as part of their monthly membership. It's a great chance to talk to Terri and maybe work through some of these thoughts that you might have about these patterns, developing sort of a dietary mindset, and that having long-term complications. This is something that comes up, I'm sure, in almost every one of the healthy mindset meetings especially, and it's a topic that our Community members love to support other people on and offer advice and strategies, too, as well as have Terri's guidance during this session.

[00:20:38] My friend from New Zealand, I'm so sorry, I'm going to get your name wrong, but I believe it's Quirien. I hope that's right or I hope I'm not too far off. My apologies. Our good friend from New Zealand says, "I quit coffee a few months ago as it was affecting my sleep, and I would also experience extreme sugar cravings one to two hours after drinking it. Since stopping coffee, I have noticed similar effects with green tea and black tea plus I

also get the jitters and increased heart rate. More recently, I've been getting insomnia after eating dark chocolate. Clearly, I'm becoming more sensitive to caffeine. Is this common for fasters or maybe this is age related? I'm a 43-year-old woman."

[00:21:22] This is a great, great question. These are all great questions. You always all have great questions, but this is very different than anything else I think that's come in. So it is not common for fasters to develop more of a caffeine sensitivity. Some people metabolize caffeine very well and some people metabolize caffeine very poorly. A lot of this is dictated by genetics, and it might be more evident to us now because we're becoming a lot more aware of what we're putting into our body and how we're feeling, whereas we kind of walked around in the dark for a long time without necessarily being aware of what we were eating and how it was impacting us, and always kind of feeling low and sluggish. So a lot of people do think that, hey, maybe these things that we experience are new, but we were probably experiencing these particular things for a longer period of time. We just were not necessarily as aware of them.

[00:22:21] Chris Kresser has this great analogy. He's like when his windshield is dirty and he might get a little mosquito splattered on it, you don't know because the windshield is always dirty, but, when you go to a car wash and you clean off that windshield and you get a little mosquito splattered on it or a little speck of dirt, it stands out like a sore thumb. When our bodies are just not being fed the right food in the right way, and our systems are not feeling really good, if we do something like have dark chocolate in the evening, or we have tea or coffee and we don't respond well to the caffeine, we don't notice at that particular moment how unwell we are because we already feel unwell. But once we do all these amazing things, start to feel great, and we introduce something that doesn't make us feel well, we really notice it. So whether it's this or whether it's gluten or whether it's dairy, these are things that repeatedly come up that we often struggle with due to other complications.

[00:23:21] With caffeine, though, this is almost always genetic and it probably has affected you in the past, but, because of your amazingly healthy lifestyle now, you're just noticing it a lot more. I feel for you. I'm so fortunate that I am a phenomenal caffeine metabolizer. Especially as a new mom, it is so important that I'm able to have that caffeine and it would so suck not being able to have it, so I really, really feel for you. You might becoming more sensitive to it, as well, as you approach perimenopause. You mention you're 43. I'm minutes away from turning 40. Going through perimenopause, I think, is one of the most challenging times in a woman's life. You know, postpartum - meh, it's okay. You know, it's not bad, but perimenopause, oh, that is going to be tough. So there are hormonal changes, too, that might exacerbate this a little bit, but just a little bit. So I do think that these issues with the caffeine were probably preexisting. You've made the right choice of cutting it out. We either process it really good or really poorly. This is where doing something like 23andMe, with the health analysis, can be cool. You can actually learn whether or not you're a good coffee or caffeine metabolism from it. But I wish you well, my friend. There's so many great herbal teas and concoctions to try out. I would definitely check that out and, hopefully, over time you just feel so good not being on the caffeine that you don't miss these items.

[00:24:54] All right. Our next question comes from Natalya from Los Angeles. "I have been fasting for almost two years (alternate-day fasting). I notice it takes longer for me to digest meals now versus before I started fasting. Is this normal and does it mean that it takes me longer to get into a fasted state now?"

[00:25:15] This is a complicated question, my friend. I would love to do a deeper dive into this to learn about what it is that you're eating and how your diet might have changed from before you started fasting until now. So something that happens is we follow the standard North American diet and we don't feel well, and discover fasting and nutritional changes, and we tighten up our diet, leaning more into healthy natural fats and protein, which are more difficult to digest. There's a whole variety of reasons, too, why it could be more difficult to digest.

[00:25:51] The really common one is just having some low stomach acid. So a lot of people take betaine HCl and pepsin to help digest proteins and fat. I know I had to do that for a while when I switched my diet. So fasting can slow down the production of digestive enzymes, but it's usually only short term. So if you've been doing this for two years, I don't necessarily think that fasting is the culprit here. It would be interesting to get your digestive enzymes taken a look at, getting your stomach acid taken a look at, just seeing if we are in good shape on that front. Taking a look at what you're eating, looking at your nutrigenomic status (Are you eating a diet that's optimal for your body to digest and to process?), and go from there. Doing some organic acid testing too could also be beneficial. So this is a little bit complex. There's a lot of different routes you could go. You know, we'd love to help you navigate it over at The Fasting Method, but I would think about how your diet has changed (if you've leaned more into fat and protein) and start to take a look at what are your digestive enzyme levels, what's your stomach acid level, and you might need some support.

[00:27:07] In general, if people have true deficiencies, then, absolutely, take digestive enzymes, take betaine HCl, take ox bile if you need it. You know, if you might not have a gallbladder, you might need to lean into some of these things more long term. If there's nothing, sometimes taking digestive bitters short term can help with their digestion and the symptoms you're experiencing. It'd be really interesting to know what type of symptoms you're experiencing that makes you notice the slow digestion of meals, as well. And I also really recommend nutrigenomics testing. So there's all different ones out there. I've personally paid for-- out of my own pocket. I don't have a relationship with this company, but the DNA company. So I've done it, I've had my husband do it, I've had my best friend do it, I've had a handful of clients who were willing to do it, and learning what kind of foods your body and your genetics have more in common with that can help. But, in general, fasting should not slow down the rate of digestion.

[00:28:06] Fasting can sometimes cause the thyroid to be a little bit sluggish, especially if you're not getting enough protein on your eating days. The thyroid gland often controls the speed of digestion or the digestive tract, so that's separate from the digestive juices. So you could always get that taken a look at with your healthcare practitioner. Making sure you're getting enough protein to support that, taking a look at your selenium and iodine levels, taking a look at your iron stores. All of these things really impact thyroid function and the conversion of inactive to active thyroid hormone. So taking a look at the whole thyroid picture can sometimes be helpful as well.

[00:28:49] All right. The next question says, "I need help with keto breath." This is from Angel in Indiana. "I've tried drinking more water, mouthwash, tongue scrapers, food-grade hydrogen peroxide mixed with water. No change. It makes me gag so much I just want to make it stop. The only thing I haven't tried is oil pulling. I can't find the 'Oil Pulling' guide on your site that is referred to in the 'Side Effects and Remedies' Quick Guide." It is its own Quick Guide, Angel. Angel, if you email info@thefastingmethod.com, I will make sure we send the Oil Pulling guide directly to you. So it should be on our website. I'm actually going

to go let our team know that it's not on our website, but we do have it. I actually can see it right now on my screen. So if you email info@thefastingmethod.com and ask for our Oil Pulling guide, I will make sure that you get it. But oil pulling can really help.

[00:29:55] Sometimes, though, I gotta tell you, my friend, that the keto breath is there. I mean, it means that you're burning body fat and that's great. So, you know, all good things do come with some baggage and this is one of them. You get great fat loss, but then you get bad breath. Drinking mint tea, too, is something that a lot of our members have said helps them out tremendously and makes them feel less self-conscious when they're interacting with others, their clients, or coworkers. So drinking mint tea, but oil pulling - it does help. It takes some time. You know, Jason would often encourage people to, you know, maybe brush your teeth several times a day instead of a couple times a day. It can be really rough. I hear you. The good news is it will get better over time. Some people it takes more time. So try that mint tea. We'll get you that Oil Pulling guide to help you get started.

[00:30:51] All right, everyone, thank you so much for joining me for another episode of The Fasting Method podcast. Until next time, happy fasting, my friends. Bye for now.