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**Megan** [00:00:06] Hi, everyone, it's Megan Ramos, and I'm here with my awesome co-host, Dr. Nadia Pateguana. Nadia, how are you doing today?

**Nadia** [00:00:13] Doing great, Megan. How about you?

**Megan** [00:00:16] Doing well and this is a great day because we get to do my favorite episode where we answer our listeners' questions. So if you're listening today and say, "Hey, I've got questions I want Megan and Nadia to answer." Well, we'd love to hear them, so please make sure you're emailing them in to [podcast@thefastingmethod.com](mailto:podcast@thefastingmethod.com). Now, Nadia and I do have a bit of a crazy day today, so Nadia, let's jump into it. If you don't mind, I think I'm going to tackle the first question because, as our hormonal health expert, I think the second question is definitely where you have the most expertise.

**Nadia** [00:00:57] Sounds good.

**Megan** [00:00:58] So our first question today - "Is unsweetened almond milk or coconut creamer in coffee enough to break a fast or interfere with fat-burning mode during a 36 or 42-hour fast. ? Or does it depend on the amount you use?"

[00:01:14] This is a really good question. So, in general, if you get to the really nitty-gritty messiness of it, it does technically break a fast. But where our listener is sort of spot on here is it really depends on the amount because our intentions for fasting are to suppress our insulin levels as much as possible on our fasting days. Of course, insulin has its own circadian rhythm and it goes up and down during the day, regardless of whether we're stimulating it or not, but the idea is behind what we put in our bodies and does that have an insulin response.

[00:01:54] Now, in general, fat has a very low, almost negligible, insulin response in some cases, but dosage always makes the poison. So if you have too much of it, you are going to end up having more of a response than you want to have, and it's going to end up being counterproductive towards your goals. Also, if you're providing your body fuel through beverages, then why would it ever have to access fuel in your fat stores? So if you are drinking a ton of fat throughout the day in your tea or coffee, well, it can just fuel off that fat, right? Even a few tablespoons is enough to fuel you for a good four to six hours. So that's four to six hours of your fast that you're not actually fasting. Now you're fueling off of that fat that you've added to your tea or coffee. So you've got to be aware of dosage makes the poison.

[00:02:50] So typically, at The Fasting Method, we found the sweet spot to be around three teaspoons, definitely no more than a couple of tablespoons, of adding this fat when you're doing a 36 or 42-hour fast. You want to make sure that when you're fasting, you're actually burning your body fat and that you're able to lower your insulin levels. So you don't want to be adding in a ton of stuff that is going to interfere with that. So keep that in mind, everyone - less is more when it comes to adding in these fasting training wheels and actually trying to lose that body fat. Nadia, anything else you'd like to add?

**Nadia** [00:03:31] I'm going to leave this one for today, Megan. I feel like I talk about this so often. I'm just going to leave it at what you've said, which is perfect.

**Megan** [00:03:39] All right, hormonal health expert. Question number two, you're up to bat.

**Nadia** [00:03:44] All right. So question number two - "Hi, guys. I'm so happy about your new podcast. I'm a big fan of your program. I was wondering if you have more information about fasting for nursing moms or even pregnancy. Is it safe? Would it affect milk production?".

[00:04:00] Well, this is a pretty simple and easy answer. It might not be what you want to hear, my friend, but there's a time and place for everything. Of course, fasting is very healing and therapeutic, but there's a time and place for everything. And what I mean is, it's our general recommendation to all pregnant women and nursing moms to not fast. In fact, it would be very unethical to recommend that these women fast. This is a time for growth. This is a time for your growing belly. And then, of course, if you're nursing, your baby is dependent on that milk. And I do think that fasting would affect your milk, and it would, of course, affect the growth of your baby because, again, very different objectives here. If you're trying to fast for weight loss or reversing diabetes, it's a different hormonal journey altogether. You're looking to lower insulin in order to burn fat and lower blood sugars. I don't think that I need to say much more of why fasting is not a good idea.

[00:04:58] The other thing I want to tell moms, in general, is pregnancy and lactation is already an intricate and complicated part of your life. I've gone through it twice, I breastfed my kids for two years each. I loved it and it was challenging and amazing all at once. So this is a time for you to focus on maybe nourishing yourself. If you want to really put a good, good effort into it, then start by looking at what you're eating. You can make infinitely better and better food choices. There's great resources out there for both pregnant and nursing moms, so focus on that. There will be a time, you have the rest of your lives, to work on weight loss and all the other things. Did you want to add something to that, Megan?

**Megan** [00:05:41] Yeah, I just want to remind the mamas out there and the mamas-to-be that there are so many great things that can happen when you're breastfeeding that are going to help with weight loss, so just breastfeeding in general's excellent with weight loss. But just because you can't fast, I want to remind you that you can do mini fasts, meaning you don't need to snack all of the time. You know, eating two to three really great nutrient-dense meals, like Nadia was saying, and how all those nutrients are going to have great health benefits. You can stick to those regular meals, and all of that is still very therapeutic towards you reaching your goal.

[00:06:22] I'm someone who's hopefully planning on becoming a mama in the next couple of years. And, you know, I'm perfectly comfortable knowing that this breastfeeding time - hopefully I can do so because it's an experience that I want to have - is going to be a period of more eating, which is frustrating because I don't like to cook. I'm the perfect person to be a faster! But it's just sort of a reminder too that I don't need to eat all day long just because I'm eating. So I've seen this go south with some of the moms that we've worked with over the years. You know, you can still stick to your three great meals a day and all that great nutrients, Nadia said. And it will help you continue to make great progress towards your weight-loss goals.

[00:07:05] So hang in there, mamas, you're still doing a great job, even if you're just getting in the 12 hours of fasting a day. It's still really helpful, so don't get discouraged.

[00:07:16] All right. Question number three - "What are the benefits seen with fasting and mental health? I feel mentally well when I'm fasting compared to eating frequently and poorly. What science can I tell myself regarding this topic?".

[00:07:34] So there is tons of stuff out there about how sugar causes depression and anxiety. There's all kinds of information out there, too, about diet and different types of mental illness as well. It is really important that if you are struggling that you really try to clean up the sugar in your diet and go to a real, whole-food diet and control your insulin levels. It can make a world of difference.

[00:08:02] So tons of information out there on it. A great resource is Bitten Jonsson, and we'll make sure that her name's spelled out and her website is in our show notes, and she really helps people combat sugar addiction to improve their mental health and well-being.

[00:08:21] And another great US-based resource is, Dr. Georgia Ede. So Dr. Ede is a psychiatrist, and her area specialty is sort of lower-carb, real whole-food-based diets that help give people the relief that they need and help them manage a lot of mental health struggles that they've got on their plate.

[00:08:46] So even though fasting can be really helpful at making you feel good, and we hear this all of the time, I think it really comes more down to the nutrients, having a really good, healthy gut microbiome. So most people don't realize this, but our gut microbiome - it's like our second brain - it produces a lot of our neurotransmitters. It's really responsible for how good we're feeling and sort of our different moods and experiences we might be having and, you know, what feeds our gut microbiome is what we feed it. So if we're feeding it great rich nutrients and lots of stuff that helps it thrive like good prebiotic food, good healthy fats, good proteins, good fiber sources (if you're someone who eats fiber), then it's going to flourish. But if you're giving it sugar, it's going to help kill the good stuff in your gut, and it's going to help the bad stuff thrive. So it's really important to tackle your diet, getting rid of the sugars and other processed and refined carbs. And processed and refined fats as well, like the seed oils in particular.

[00:09:54] Now, in terms of fasting, fasting in general promotes a tremendous amount of mental clarity. It also helps tidy up your gut microbiome, so it helps, you know, keep that second brain nice and healthy. And so many individuals report reductions in anxiety, depression, and ADHD symptoms.

[00:10:15] I was actually someone who in university became dependent on Adderall and then Vyvanse because I didn't understand why my attention had gone down the toilet. I never had issues as a kid or in high school, but in university, when I was the most passionate, I was the most, you know, I had the biggest intentions of being the most focused in my life, I was struggling. And I was studying topics that I absolutely loved, so it didn't make sense. It wasn't like I was trying to study stuff I wasn't interested in, and it was tough. But after a few months of fasting and cutting the sugar out, or working on cutting the sugar out, of my diet at the same time, I was able to go off those medications because I was focused on everything - things I loved and even things like taxes that I definitely do not love!

[00:11:06] So there's great mental clarity and there's great healing benefits too. So we see this all of the time - improvement in, and of, anxiety and depression.

[00:11:14] And then fasting is also really great for those of us who are on medications to help us deal with some of our mental health struggles. Many of those medications actually can cause insulin resistance. So when you're fasting, you're helping to maintain your good health and even better your health if you are someone who does need to take these medications. And we have worked in the clinic with patients with bipolar disorder, too, and they've been able to reduce medications in certain cases, lose weight and feel fantastic. And a lot, again, a lot of these medications cause weight gain, cause insulin-related issues. And by incorporating some fasting, you can really help take control of those side effects and maintain your waistline and your good health.

[00:12:02] Nadia, what about you? What's your experience with this? And working with patients and our Community members?

**Nadia** [00:12:09] I think one of the biggest advantages that we've had, of course, is that we've clinically fasted so many people, so we've basically come across almost a bit of everything.

[00:12:18] But personally, I've always been open about my personal journey and I've struggled with mental health concerns. I had postpartum depression with my first child. Last year I had another bout, also due to a similar circumstance - hormonal changes. And so the one thing that I have noticed myself, for sure---so after having my second child, when I determined that I was going to go low-carb and do intermittent fasting---one of the things that I noticed was most impacted was my mood, the stability and mood. And of course, then, you know, when I dabble in, as you said, sugar and other things, I notice how that impacts my mood. It's no longer nice and stable. It's a lot of ups and downs. And so if you give yourself the opportunity to check for this, you will notice probably the same thing.

[00:13:09] And one thing that we learned while working with women with PCOS was how insulin is such an amazingly powerful hormone. It's not only a metabolic hormone that determines your---manages your blood sugars and determines your fat storage. It has a tremendous impact on your reproductive hormones, but it also seems to have a tremendous impact on your nervous system. So it's actually probably a lot more to this than we even realize. But our body, remember we are not---even if at times conventional medicine makes it seem like we're these independent organs, we're in this interconnected system. So when something's off, other things tend to go off. So when you start to improve your health, reverse insulin resistance, when you start to feel better in general, your mood also improves. So I mean, take the anecdotal evidence of this, if nothing else. But there is some interesting science, as Megan said, behind this as well.

**Megan** [00:14:05] All right, Nadia. [laughs] I'm kind of laughing looking at this question because we were just chatting about it about an hour or two ago. And I know it was something that you've been talking a lot about in our Community recently. And this is, I think this is a really interesting question because most people don't realize that something like this could have a negative impact. So we'll throw over question number four to you.

**Nadia** [00:14:38] Gladly. So question number four says, "What do you think about chewing xylitol gum to improve fasting breath? Does xylitol trigger insulin? And please rank: honey, maple syrup, and xylitol for use during my ten to six eating window days?".

[00:14:56] So if you're familiar with my Community meetings or if you've done my masterclass, you know that I talk about this quite a bit. I'm a big proponent of TRE (time restricted eating) and that being the epitome of intermittent fasting. And so even though I'm not for or against any particular food, I don't even like to categorize food as being good or bad, high calorie, low calorie, high carb, low carb. I like the idea of encouraging people to look at their day as how many eating windows you're going to have, or rather, how many times today are you going to purposely produce insulin?

[00:15:37] And so what's happening is that you're inadvertently raising insulin outside of your eating windows when really that is not what you want to do. What you want to do, and Megan talked about this, I think, already today, when she talked about the almond and coconut milk. What you're trying to do outside of meals, of course, is you're trying to inhibit insulin production, right? So this isn't about whether xylitol has more or less of an insulin production than honey or maple syrup, it's that if you're choosing to have some sweeteners, then I mean, make sure that you bring them into your meal. So if it's an eating day and you're having two meals, then bring it into those two meals. If you don't want to have sweeteners at all, because they do have an insulin production, then that's great too - then you don't have to worry about it at all.

[00:16:25] If you're looking for a sweetener to have, I've heard Megan say this, although I personally don't categorize them as such, but I have heard Megan say that pure maple syrup is her go-to thing, but for very, very special occasions and of course, within a meal. I know she mixes it in with butter and it makes this awesome sort of pancake-type syrup. But for me, it's really up to you what you choose to bring into your meals. I do give some education on this, which foods have higher versus less of an insulin response. I usually tell people to avoid sweeteners because, for me, it's a bit of a rabbit hole. I find that if I do have sweeteners, I have a much harder time closing my eating window, I will tend to graze and crave a lot more. So it's something that I may bring in to, of course, special occasions, but it's not something that I have on a regular basis, I'm not able to. I don't want to have them, but I know I don't have a great relationship with these higher insulin-producing things.

[00:17:26] So outside of meals, I would say none of these. Within a meal, I say choose the one that you're most comfortable with (I do think that Megan does have a recommendation).

[00:17:37] Chewing gum is one that people ask me about all the time. I think if you're going to chew gum, my recommendation is that you chew it right after you finish eating and then you throw it out. I don't think you should chew gum between meals. Again, because you either want to be in the fed state or the fasted state, right? So the fed state is that state where you're eating a rich, satiating, nourishing meal for about 30 to 60 minutes, and then you want to stop, so that you can allow that insulin drop, which does take a bit over four hours. And so in that between-meal period, which I would recommend to be about five to seven hours on an eating day, you want to have that slow and steady insulin decrease. You don't want to keep stimulating that insulin production between meals with xylitol or with any other insulin-producing thing. So that's really my thought.

[00:18:27] And so I know a lot of you guys are still thinking about and still deciding or struggling with the idea of not chewing gum all day long. I just talked about that today in one of my meetings. I had someone in my meeting today, Megan, tell me that she used to

chew gum 24 hours a day, including in bed. So even if she wasn't chewing it, but she would have it in her mouth. I mean, this is something that we must address.

[00:18:53] You know, if we're going into the intermittent fasting world, we first have to start working on the mindset of things. And the idea that you clearly want to be in a fed state at times and you want to be in a fasted state at others. And the only way to hormonally go into a fasted state is to remove all of these sweeteners, all of these flavors, and all of these things that you may (at this point) inadvertently be putting into your in-between meal periods. Anything you want to add to that, Megan,

**Megan** [00:19:24] Maybe to share my personal experience with both gum and sweeteners. So I was a gum junkie, and when I first started fasting, the gum-junkie state carried on. And after a while, the amount of gas that builds up in your abdomen when chewing gum on an empty stomach is torturous. It was honestly, I've got PTSD from it. It was some of the most difficult stuff. I have had over 30 hours of cardiac ablation I was awake for - that's where they are burning parts of your heart, right, [laughs] with electricity. This gas stuff, oh my gosh! It was, the gas pains were just unreal. And I went through a couple of episodes before I realized, "Oh my gosh, like, I just can't," like, you know, and I knew it was counterproductive from an insulin standpoint. And I actually went and I started just chewing on crushed ice. I would lightly salt some crushed ice, and that's how I dealt with sort of transitioning from just chewing a lot to not chewing at all. And that was something that really helped me, and it was a great way to also get in some salt and some more water to stay hydrated during my fast, too.

[00:20:47] And then sweeteners, oh my goodness. I was never sweet, like, other than my tea, which I know in a recent episode I mentioned that I used to have four sugars in a tea, I was not a sweet tooth person. I got sick from more starchy foods, excessive deep-fried type of starchy foods, but not sweet foods. And I never really had sweeteners - never cared for it, never craved anything sweet. I might attack someone for a pretzel, but never for anything that tasted sweet.

[00:21:19] So Nadia and I, we were at a conference called Low Carb Breckenridge, and we went to an after-party - it was actually the night that I met Terri Lance in person - and someone had made these pecan bar things with stevia. And I was like a raging addict. I ate the whole thing! People were staring at me.

**Nadia** [00:21:43] I remember this. [laughter]

**Megan** [00:21:45] People thought I had this eating disorder. I just remember Terri's face, people were looking at me trying to mask their horror, but I could see their horror and I had no control. Never in my life, even when I was at my most sick, insulin-resistant state, had I gone for anything that tasted sweet like that. Never. And I was just like, "Oh my gosh. Like, this is the stuff we talk about. I'm experiencing it." I felt out of control. And then Nadia, who was, unfortunately for her, my roommate during this conference, I was sick all night because a lot of these sweeteners, they wreak havoc on your GI system. And I was so sick all night, this poor co-host of mine had to listen to me, and it just was---it was not a fun way to bond with each other. [laughs]

**Nadia** [00:22:40] Or maybe it was. Maybe that's why we're so close. [laughter]

**Megan** [00:22:44] We have now seen each at the highest highs and definitely the GI lows. It was not, not good at all. And I was just like, "Wow!" I know I say this stuff, but to really experience it was awful.

[00:22:59] And we've seen it so many times too. Like people take these sweeteners and they're having such GI distress, it just makes them want to eat all of the time too, especially eating more comfort foods that they would go to when they had an upset tummy. So it makes the fasting difficult for insulin reasons. It makes the fasting difficult because your tummy is upset. It makes you crave more garbage because of the sweetness stimulus, but it makes you crave more garbage to help settle your system. It's just bad all-around stuff, so it's good to avoid.

[00:23:31] The only xylitol that I have in my diet is a little bit in my toothpaste, and that's not bad for keeping, you know, your mouth microbiome in check. But otherwise, it's not a real thing. And Nadia's spot on, I think raw honey (if you needed something occasionally), pure maple syrup, and---for those of you who're listening, there's four times a year when we make coconut-flour waffles or pancakes (they're Diet Doctor recipes), four times a year. We make them twice a year for each of our dogs' birthdays, we make them for my husband's birthday, and we make them on Christmas morning. Either the waffles or the pancakes - I think it's almost the same recipe. And I will take like half a cup of butter and I'll put it in a quarter of a teaspoon of maple syrup and I'll mix it in, just to give the butter a little bit of a kick when we're having these coconut-flour pancakes. And the coconut flour's got like, the pancakes have got no sweeteners, no anything, in them. So it's probably as low carb as you can get for having one of these substitutes. So we do it four times a year with a little bit of maple syrup.

[00:24:38] I do have raw honey in my pantry. And every now and then, my husband and I will host a holiday or gathering and a friend will reach out to us and say, "Hey, we want to bring a dessert, but we want to be respectful of yours and Angel's (Angel's my husband), food choices. So we don't want to bring anything that is offensive. But you know, we want to bring a dessert for those people who do eat dessert," and they'll ask, you know, what can they use? "Do I like sugar alcohols? Do I like stevia?" What can they use? And in those cases, I'll usually say, "Monk fruit." So if you're going to bring a dessert for the other guests, you know, use monk fruit. We had a family holiday pre-COVID and a cousin of mine was just transitioning to low-carb diets and fasting and she said, "You know, I'm either going to eat the real pie or I'm going to eat a substitute, but I'm at that place in my journey where I need the substitute." And I said, "Well, why don't you go for some monk fruit then, if you need that, because it's less likely to cause some GI distress."

[00:25:41] But, I can't tell you, if I had a quarter for every time someone was hitting a wall left, right and center with fasting, not being able to fast, not able to lose weight, struggling with weird GI symptoms. And if I had a quarter for every time that they cut out stevia, a sugar alcohol, or any other substitute - in two weeks, they're fasting like machines, the weight is melting off, the blood-sugar levels are improving. So if you're out there and you are struggling, you are suffering, then it's probably best to kick these sweeteners to the curb.

**Nadia** [00:26:17] I am very aware of my relationship with these foods. I actually have a better relationship with sugar, if you can even call it that, than I have with sweeteners. And I think it's because when I started my journey to lower carb, I, you know, I did what everybody else does - I looked for substitutes and then I realized that I really could not

control this. Whereas when you look at, you know, sugar and ice cream, or a dessert, you know, you look at it for what it is, but when you're trying to substitute for healthier things, you think that they're healthier, and that means that you're going to be able to control your cravings (when you have them), but clearly not, right? So it's a tricky thing for me.

[00:26:53] I think that I want to channel coach Terri here, Megan - we often joke, "What would Terri say?" [laughter] And Terri, actually, "What would Terri say?" And I learned something very useful for me and for my clients in Terri's latest masterclass. She talked about foods, and she asked us to look at foods as whether we felt like we were abusing them or whether we had an addiction to them. I'm not sure quite how she put it, but it made me realize something really important - some foods we abuse, meaning that we just have too much of it too often, maybe without even realizing. And those foods that we abuse, of course, you'd be wise to sort of learn how to control them, have less of them, decide when you want them, when you don't want them. And I think that sweeteners is one of those. It's something that you should decide how often you're going to have, how much of it you're going to have, when are you going to have it? It's definitely not something that you want to abuse all day long.

[00:27:47] Now, if you get to the point where you try to do that and then I get an email, or Megan gets a message, saying, "Oh, I'm trying to, you know, reduce xylitol (or whatever sweetener) and I can't, I can't. I just can't stop having it all day. I can't take it out of my tea." Then you may want to consider whether you're abusing it or you have an addiction to it. If you can't control it, right?

[00:28:09] And then---I think that this is tricky, there are experts definitely in the field of food addiction and sugar addiction, and I'm not one of those, but I think that any time--and I've learned this from Terri. I don't know if she even says it this directly and this plainly, but, for me, it made a lot of sense. If there's any time anything that you feel like you're addicted to, the only solution is to remove it from your diet, period. Because there's no way that you can control something that you're addicted to. But if it's something that you just feel like you're abusing, then just have less of it less often, decide when to have it and when not to have it.

**Megan** [00:28:40] Thanks, Nadia. And thank you to everyone who wrote in with their questions today, we appreciate it. Again, if you have questions, email them to us at [podcast@thefastingmethod.com](mailto:podcast@thefastingmethod.com). And if you like this podcast, make sure to hit 'like' and subscribe. And if you'd like to leave us any comments, feedback, or just let us know what you like or what you want more of on this podcast, make sure to go to iTunes and leave a comment.

[00:29:06] All right, Nadia. Until next time, we'll see everybody. Happy fasting, team.

**Nadia** [00:29:11] Bye everyone.