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Megan [00:00:06] Hey, everyone, it's Megan Ramos here. I'm joined by my incredible co-host, Dr. Nadia Pateguana. We're going to be tackling your questions in today's Q&A episode. Nadia, how are you doing today?

Nadia [00:00:18] Doing great, Megan. How are you?

Megan [00:00:20] Good. I really love these episodes because we get to answer the questions and talk about the topics that our listeners are the most eager about, and we've got some great questions for today. So Nadia, do you want to kick things off with the first question?

Nadia [00:00:38] I certainly do.

Megan [00:00:40] All right. It says, "I have been fasting three times a week for 42 hours, starting from last month, and I'm losing my period. Am I fasting too much?"

Nadia [00:00:51] What a great question. And it really, if you listen in last week to our 'Hot Topic: Women and Fasting', or women's health, we actually touched upon this briefly in that, first of all, not getting a period once or getting a late period one time could result from so many things - any change in diet, any stressful period. I mentioned that when I had an overseas flight from Canada back to where I live in Portugal, that, in and of itself, delayed my period a few days. A serious medical concern. Really, any physical or emotional stress can affect your periods. So not getting a period for one month or having a late period for one month is not a sign of bad health or concern. Not getting a period for a few months, now that's something else.

[00:01:44] So it's hard to say why you're not getting or you haven't yet gotten your period. I mean, we're ignoring the most obvious here, you know, you could be pregnant. [laughs] And so that is---usually when you look up on Google, if you haven't tried it, try it. If you Google 'missed period', the first thing that comes up is pregnancy, not fasting. [laughs] And fasting, of course, as you probably know, and we've talked about in the 'Women and Fasting' hot topic episode, fasting is the most effective therapeutic and healing approach for people that have the most common type of reproductive disorders. And so it is possible that losing a bit of weight, messing with your diet, and fasting a little bit longer can affect your period by a few days. You will likely get it within a few days, within the next month anyway, and that isn't usually a cause for concern. Now, if you're not getting your period for months on end, then of course you need to figure out what's going on.

Megan [00:02:42] Thanks, Nadia. Question number two is, "How do we know if we're eating enough on our non-fasting days?"

[00:02:51] This is really tricky because so many of you out there really don't ever experience satiation because our hormones are just so out of sync from where they need to be. We don't really know if we are feeling full. And to a healthy person out there without insulin resistance, that can sound almost crazy, right? But it is true. Our hormones dictate when we feel hungry, when we feel satiated. And those hunger hormones combined with insulin and inflammation can really prevent us from really experiencing a deep level of satiation.

[00:03:33] So leptin is our primary satiation hormone. And when it is produced, it goes to the brain and it essentially shuts off our hunger in our brain. But there are things that can block it from getting to our brain. And one of those things is inflammation. And we know that eating processed and refined foods, sugars and fats, we know that eating all of the time, we know that's stimulating lots of insulin and insulin resistance all creates a ton of inflammation in our body. So there's lots of people out there who just aren't sure. So don't feel alone and don't feel that you're infinitely broken.

[00:04:15] Usually, when someone starts a fasting protocol, we do the best that we can on our eating days. But if we stay consistent with that fasting protocol, most people find that within a month they actually start to experience satiation, sometimes for the first time in years, because that fasting has reduced the insulin as they reduce the inflammation. And that satiation hormone, leptin? Well, it can get to your brain and do its job and shut off your hunger. It's amazing how many times people come into our Community or come into our groups and say, "Hey, I left food on my plate," like, "Who am I? Who is this person?" Just this morning, I was reading a comment. One of our members had a bunch of muffins dropped off, and she just had no hunger, no desire, to have any of those muffins. She was full from the meal that she had. So hang in there, everyone.

[00:05:11] The best piece of advice I have is stick to a consistent fasting practice, show up on your fasting days, hang in there. Really, you know, on your eating days, try to stick to your meals. Really focus on prioritizing those natural fats, so things like olives and olive oil, avocados and avocado oil, you know, natural animal fats. Enjoy the butter and the ghee and the grass-fed beef and the fish. Enjoy the good fats. Make sure that you are getting in protein. A sign of not getting enough protein is craving sugar, and as we get older, we do have some slightly higher demands for protein. So if you are craving sugar, add in about an extra 10 or 15 grams of protein; it can make a difference. And if you're someone who eats fiber, then enjoy those fiber sources but start to explore the leafy greens and the non-starchy vegetables. And you can make those fatty by cooking them in fats: plant-based fats, coconut oil, olive, avocado oil. And you can also use things like duck fat. I absolutely love cooking all of my vegetables in duck fat. So I cook most of my leafy greens in some olive oil - good quality olive oil - but really utilizing a lot of those duck fats. The worst thing you can do on your eating days is fill up on nuts and seeds and cheese. So you really want to make sure that you are getting in those fibrous vegetables or leafy greens cooked in fat if you are someone who does eat plants. But otherwise, you really want to focus on getting in those eggs, and the meat, and the fish, and the poultry - all good quality stuff - getting in their natural fats and getting in a good amount of fat and protein.

[00:06:54] And the satiation? It will come. So hang in there. Don't stress. You don't need to count a calorie. You don't need to count anything. I never once counted anything because I was a scientist. I am a scientist and I can get so bogged down in all of the numbers and all of the data that it can really roadblock my progress. So when I was diagnosed and when I needed to lose weight, I said, "I'm letting go of that. I'm not going to add in any roadblocks." And I just focused on eating those real good foods, cooking everything in a good quality fat, and enjoying. So, you know, they have the saying that you 'shop on the outskirts of the grocery store', you know, sort of minus the bread section. So if it came from the land or the sea, I ate it. If it came in a box or a can I, most often, didn't. There's the odd exception, you know, with the can, you can get some sardines in a tin and whatnot, but for

the most part, it just came from the outskirts of the store. Focused on that, focused on my fasting and the satiation came in.

[00:07:58] So it will happen. Hang in there. Be consistent with your fasting practice. Nadia, do you have any thoughts to add to that?

Nadia [00:08:04] No, that was perfect. But it does lead nicely into our third question, which asks, "What is the best protocol for weight loss?".

[00:08:14] And I think that Megan started us off really nicely. I think that the best fasting schedule, best protocol, for weight loss is the nice balance between eating and fasting and the one that you can do most consistently. So I think that a big part of the journey is figuring out what your eating day should look like. So Megan just described in a lot of really great detail how to eat on your non-fasting days, also known as your eating days, and having a nice balance between having about, I would say for consistent weight loss, having about half the week be your eating days and half the week be your fasting days. And so then figuring out what your fasting days are going to look like. Is that a full-day fast? Are you at that point yet? Or are you building towards that? And if you are building towards that, maybe your fasting day looks like one meal as opposed to a full-day fast. And you're alternating your eating days, which might be two or three meals, with your fasting days, which might be one meal or no meal.

[00:09:15] And the 'alternating' word there is key. It seems like the best weight-loss protocol is the one where you actually alternate. So not only are half the week eating days and half the week fasting days, but you're not doing that in a row - you're alternating the eating days and the fasting days. And so finding a nice balance, a nice, comfortable balance. Of course, you can use fasting aids to help. You have to look at your electrolytes as well, particularly for your fasting days and your hydration. But creating that really nice balance. And I often call this a 60:40 protocol, and that's really just a percentile split because a week has seven days, sort of splitting the week into four days versus three days. So four days of eating versus three days of fasting or vice versa, but trying to do that in an alternate type pattern. And doing it, again, Megan mentioned that a little while ago, being as consistent as you can. And then maybe if you have the, if you build that fasting muscle, if you have that fasting muscle already, throwing in a longer, whether it's an extended fast or just a more therapeutic healing, longer fast, maybe once a month for that extra punch. And then following that up with your alternate-day type of protocol for that continuous weight loss. What do you think about that, Megan?

Megan [00:10:36] No, Nadia I think you covered it perfectly. And this question, I guess we have a good flow of questions today. It flows perfectly into our next question, which is, "How should I start fasting? When do I know to increase my fasts? And is that when I stop losing weight altogether?".

[00:10:55] So you mentioned something - our 'fasting muscle' - and this is a concept that I just love. Think about going to the gym, everybody. If you've never been to the gym before, you don't show up to the gym and expect to do the same training plan as a bodybuilder, right? Maybe that's your goal, but even if it is your goal, you know that that's totally unrealistic on your first day in the gym. You have to start off small. So let's say you're doing a squat. You might do a squat with no weight, and that might be really tough, leaving your legs and your glutes feeling sore for a day or two. And then maybe you'll add 10 pounds, maybe 20 pounds. But over time, that weight gets easier. And then suddenly the next thing

you know you're squatting with your own body weight added on to it. But you do it over time. And most of us know that if we're trying to build muscle, we need to use a little bit of weight, but not so much so that we don't find it challenging because if we don't find it challenging, we're not going to put on any muscle mass. And if we use too much weight, we're going to hurt ourselves. So most of us know when we go to the gym, we pick a weight where it's not super challenging for the first few reps, but for the last couple of reps, it's super-duper challenging and that's what we work with. And over time, with consistency, it becomes easier. We also know that we have to go to the gym a few times a week if we want to build muscle. We can't just show up periodically, seasonally, every day for a week here and there. You don't expect to be any stronger or fitter at the end of the year.

[00:12:43] So it's exactly like that with fasting. If you've never fasted before, you should not start off with a 48-hour fast. You need to start off somewhere where you're going to let your body adapt. Somewhere that's challenging but is not too challenging.

[00:13:00] So let's say you're an individual who has never really fasted at all - you eat in the morning, you eat up until bedtime, you never really thought twice about grabbing something as you walked by the office lunchroom, staff room. Well, a place where you just start off is simply by not snacking and going back to those three square meals a day that our grandparents and great grandparents grew up eating. Just three meals without snacking. This is challenging for so many reasons. First of all, grazing has become a habit. It's a tough habit to break because we'll often reach for that food, not thinking about it after doing it for so long. But also making time to make meals can be challenging, especially in today's day and age when we're busier than ever with more stress than we've experienced throughout a lot of human history. So setting aside time to do that meal preparation or finding services that can substitute with really good quality meals can be challenging, but it's worthwhile doing and developing those habits.

[00:14:07] Then once you get into a regular pattern, just three meals a day, you're going to find that you're doing 14 hours a day fasting naturally. Then it would be best to cut one meal out a day. So you're doing two meals a day, and this usually happens by people cutting out breakfast, especially here in North America. When our mornings are so hectic, breakfast foods do take a little while to make, and most of the quick and easy breakfast options are not that good for us. And a lot of people find that just having coffee or a cup of tea in the morning really kills their appetite in the first place. So why force themselves to eat? And diabetics will know their blood sugar levels, often they are highest in the morning. So why add fuel to the fire by eating more? So many people will start to cut out breakfast, and this will result in doing 16 or 18 hours of fasting with just two meals and no snacks.

[00:15:01] And then from there, you need to assess your progress. Many individuals looking to lose a significant amount of weight and to reverse metabolic diseases like Type 2 diabetes or PCOS, need to be doing one of the therapeutic protocols that we talk about - the 24, 36, 42, 48 - and perhaps in certain cases, the occasional extended fast. Rarely are the 16 or 18-hour fasts going to reverse metabolic illness. But you need to gauge your results. You know, if it isn't broken, don't fix it. So wherever you fall - 16, 24, 36 - whatever protocol you end up on, if it's working, then there's no need to change it up. But, like Nadia said, if you really want to keep the weight-loss ball rolling and you are finding that you hit these periodic plateaus or slowdowns, you do want to be changing things up.

[00:15:53] So when do you increase the fast? Well, plateauing is a big sign that you need to change things up, as Nadia discussed. But if you're someone who wants to try to avoid

plateaus, you can change it up, as Nadia described. But if you want to avoid plateaus and you're thinking that, "OK, this fasting protocol is now super easy." It's like lifting those five-pound weights at the gym, and you know you could probably lift 25 pounds, then that's time to increase your fasts.

[00:16:23] When I was going through my journey, that first week of 18 hours of fasting, oh my gosh, I could have eaten drywall at the end of the day. I was, you know, it was so challenging. But then the second week it was really easy and I thought, "OK, if I was at the gym, I would increase my weight of what I was lifting. So I'm going to increase the duration of my fasts now." So after two weeks, I went to 24 hours. And at first, so challenging again, but by week three and week four, it became really easy. And by week four, it was almost too easy. I hadn't plateaued, wanted to avoid it, and thought, "All right, let me try the 36, 42-hour fasts," and I hated breakfast anyway, so 42s was the perfect thing to slide into there. And at first, it was really hard, just like increasing that weight at the gym. But with consistency, it became very easy.

[00:17:16] So build up over time. Really think of it like the gym. If you can lift more weight, you probably should - to keep things moving and to keep gaining that muscle. So if you could fast a little bit more - go from, you know, 16 to 18 hours, 18 to 24 hours, 24 to 30 or 36. When it starts to feel easy, that's when you know that your body's ready to try a more therapeutic plan. And when you get into those therapeutic ranges, if it's not broken, don't fix it, but if you do hit a plateau, just like Nadia said, you know, mixing it up, changing up those protocols, that can really help you bust through a plateau and keep the weight loss coming. Nadia, any additional thoughts there?

Nadia [00:17:56] Really hard to add something to that. That was priceless. I'm a big fan of what people call 'baby steps'. I think that building and learning these skills, as we've talked about today---today, there were some really great questions, they really led nicely into one another into talking about how to create eating days versus fasting days, what's the right balance between eating days and fasting days? And I think that this is something that we learn better if we really take the step-by-step approach. So I'm a really big fan of that. I think that this all ties in so nicely together - your eating days and your fasting days. On your eating days, you know, figuring out the whole concept of TRE (time-restricted eating - full meals, no snacking), and then removing, as you said, taking away one meal, you know, and now you're instead of having three meals, you're eating day is two meals. And then when you're ready, when that feels too easy, adding in the concept of this alternate-day fast. But maybe you go two meals, one meal - so the famous 24-hour, alternate-day fast - and maybe you do that for a long time, you know, as it's feeling easier. And maybe you start with a fasting aid when you remove that first meal and then you no longer need the fasting aid. And the next week, maybe you're doing the two meals, one meal, with a fasting aid on your fasting day. But maybe by the third week, it's getting so easy that you remove that fasting aid, so now you're just doing TRE - two meals, one meal, alternating the 24-hour fast - and maybe you do that for a few weeks because, like Megan said, if it ain't broke, don't fix it.

[00:19:31] If you're getting results, if you're still feeling the burn and it's giving you good results, like going to the gym, then keep doing that. I have seen postmenopausal women lose over 50 pounds with the alternate-day, 24-hour fast. And when you look at why some women are losing and others not, you know, it could be because, you know, some people are more insulin resistant than others, and therefore they need those longer, more therapeutic fast. But many times it's looking at things like, again, what are you having

outside of your meals that you are at a point where you could remove and bring into your meals? You know, are you eating earlier in the day? We talked about this in other episodes. You know, that eating later at night and eating past sunset will have a higher insulin response. And so eating earlier in the day is going to put that extra weight on that fasting muscle and it's going to help you move along and maybe prevent plateaus. Or if you're already at a plateau, this could be one of the things that you can do, right?

[00:20:39] And then next, of course, the next step is you increase, like Megan said, you increase your fasts as often as you need to, as often as you feel like you're ready to, based on that fasting muscle. And you'll have these continuous, not just weight-loss results, but you'll have this continuous healing and what we often call NSVs, there are so many. And in the previous episode, we talked a lot about women and fasting and women's health, and I mentioned metabolic age versus biological age - this concept that we can age in reverse. And we've seen this in our Community so many times and joke that 60 really is the new 40. And so there's so many great benefits to just doing this step-by-step, 'baby step' approach and every so often as you feel ready, moving along further.

[00:21:28] And really, this ties in nicely with what I'm learning from our friend and colleague, Terri Lance. This idea of 'growth mindset', right? I mean, this is important for changing habits both in our mind and in our body. This idea of not staying in this 'fixed mindset', that, "Well, I'm already doing 24-hour fasts, how much more fasting do I have to do?" That's a very fixed mindset, and it has no benefit to you to even think like that. You know, if you're thinking about it from, you know, the analogy that Megan and I just used, and that Megan often uses, the gym analogy. You would never say that at the gym, you would never say, "Well, I'm already lifting 50 pounds, why do I have to lift more?" You would be excited and proud and encouraged every time you can lift another 10 pounds, and that's really the same with fasting. I think it's the thought of, "I have to do more," as opposed to when you're actually able to and you're actually doing it, it feels amazing. So just build on that and, you know, building blocks, step-by-step, baby steps and you'll get there for sure.

Megan [00:22:36] Thanks, Nadia, and thank you to everyone who sent in your questions. We're going to wrap up today's episode, but if you have questions you'd like us to answer, please send them in. You can email us at podcast@thefastingmethod.com and we'll be sure to get to them in one of these episodes. Next week we have a special guest. We're going to talk to a husband and wife team who are very near and dear to our heart at The Fasting Method and hear about their entire family's transformation. First, cutting out the junk and then implementing the fasting. And they've done some really great things since then. Not only has it transformed their health and their lives, it's also transformed one of their careers. So I'm so looking forward to that interview next week.

[00:23:24] All right, everyone. Thank you so much for joining us today and happy fasting.

Nadia [00:23:28] Bye, everyone.