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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.

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[00:01:13] All right. And now we'll get started with today's episode.

[00:01:19] Hi, everyone. It's Megan Ramos here and welcome to another episode of The Fasting Method podcast. Today I'm joined by my lovely co-host, Dr. Nadia Pateguana, and today we are going to answer your questions. Now, we understand there is a bit of a backlog of questions, so we're working on creative ways to try to get through them and we appreciate everybody's patience. But we've got four great questions to answer today. First, we're going to check in with my co-host and see how she is doing. How's it going, Nadia?

Nadia [00:01:53] It's going, Megan. How about you?

Megan [00:01:56] It is going. [laughs] It is a busy, busy time of year. Of course, we're gearing up for Christmas now. It's just just a week away, actually, at the time that this episode is airing, but it's already crazy getting busy for the holidays. I'm just happy I'm not moving this Christmas holiday. I moved 2020 Christmas - I moved from Toronto to the San Francisco area. 2021 - I moved from one side of the San Francisco Bay to the other side of the San Francisco Bay. All at Christmas. So I'm going to stay put and I'm going to enjoy the holidays for the first time in, it feels like, a very long time.

Nadia [00:02:41] Oh, that's good. I can't even imagine moving during the holidays. In fact, like you, we've moved around a bit and I am just looking forward to staying put as well.

Megan [00:02:52] Well, we'll get started with these questions because we know that people are really busy this holiday season and are looking to maximize what they can to maintain or make some progress before the New Year.

[00:03:06] Now, I'm going to tackle the first question which asks, "Can we take supplements like prebiotics and probiotics during extended fasting? So far I've experienced constipation after breaking an extended fast."

[00:03:21] This is a good question. In general, you can take pre and probiotics when you're fasting, so long as they don't cause tummy troubles. They can sometimes cause people to have a lot of loose stools, sudden bowel movements. It's not very enjoyable when you're fasting because you might be out or you might be working in the middle of a conference call, so you don't want to have to worry about having to rush to a bathroom. And if we have

too many loose stools, or too-frequent bowel movements during a fast, we can get a little electrolyte depleted. So those are my only words of caution. If you can take them during a fast and feel fine, then you absolutely can continue to take them. I would definitely check with the pre and probiotics that you do have though, make sure you're not having tummy troubles on your eating days. If you are having tummy troubles with them on your eating days, you're most certainly going to have them on your fasting days as well. But if you've taken them for about two weeks and you haven't had trouble on your eating days, then they're probably fine to introduce into your next extended fast.

[00:04:31] I do often some specific extended fasts really targeting gut health. I've gone through some fertility treatments recently and taken all kinds of hormones so I could bank some embryos so I wouldn't have to worry about doing that later on in life when we're starting a family or looking to add to our family, and these hormones have wreaked havoc on my gut. So during these periods of time when we have to maybe take antibiotics or other medications or get a stomach bug, we might want to do some fasting targeted at our gut health. And when I do that, I include a lot of bone broth and I do take my probiotics during a fast (an extended fast) when that is the intention.

[00:05:17] So just be cautious. Make sure you've tested them out on your eating days. If they're okay, try them on your fasting days. If you do notice GI upset, cut your fast short and let the tummy heal. You can always restart your fast without them down the road.

[00:05:33] All right, Nadia, now over to you for question number two.

Nadia [00:05:37] All right, Megan. So question number two. I actually should be a, quote-unquote, expert in answering this. So this person says, "I'm going to Europe for a few weeks..." And guess what? I live in Europe. [laughs] So she's going to Italy and France and wants to buy a CGM machine, "...which I know you can get there at most pharmacies. Is there a specific brand or type of machine that you recommend? I don't know much about them, but would like to buy something that can give me some data on what's going on inside my body during my fast and when I eat."

[00:06:08] This is a great question. Even though I live in Europe, I've never bought a CGM here. I have used a CGM on a couple of occasions, but I got my CGM in Canada. I am pretty certain that you are correct that you can get a CGM here at most pharmacies. I have no idea how much they cost. I do know that, just like in North America, the insurances here don't cover for CGMs unless you are an insulin-dependent diabetic because I've asked our medical doctor here in Portugal. So I did pay out of pocket. I paid and I bought CGMs, actually, in Canada at Costco. There are the same... This I know because we do have a little friend, my daughter has a little friend that has type one diabetes, and she gets her CGMs here, of course. And so the same machines that you can get in North America are also available here. The most common ones are the Freestyle Libre and the DexCom. So that's likely what you're going to find here at the pharmacies, as far as brands.

[00:07:12] As far as my experience with a CGM, it's been a super great amount of learning, but also confirming a lot of the information that I have learned from working with so many of you and people that have had a CGM within our Community. Actually today we were talking about this in one of my Community meetings, but within our Community, loads of people (with and without diabetes) have used a CGM for a period of time and have actually logged... Within our Community forum, there's actually a special thread conversation on a CGM. So for those of you that don't know what a CGM is, it's a continuous glucose monitor and it has a sensor that basically reads your blood sugar and

it has an app that connects to your phone. It's actually really, really cool. There's a ton of learning that can be done by getting a CGM. It might be something that you want to consider. Unfortunately, it is expensive, I think everywhere in the world. But if you can afford it or if you can get this covered by your insurance, then I would go for it totally, 100%.

[00:08:20] I talked to one of our our clients, actually. She's a medical doctor and she's a client of mine. She does health consultations with me and she actually gets CGM for free. Can you imagine? And she has never popped one in. And we were just talking about that this week as well because there is a tremendous amount of learning that can be done if you do put in a CGM, or at least confirmation of things that you already are wondering about or are suspicious about.

[00:08:48] For me, having a CGM was really great to confirm things that I already was certain about or was very suspicious about. Like, how would artificial flavors impact me? How would sweeteners impact me? How would chewing gum impact me was another very interesting one. Also, looking at how high my blood sugars go when I have processed foods. And the rebound hypoglycemia that was, you know, the kind of learning that you can experience. And also one of the most interesting comparisons that I liked to see with my CGM was what a big difference there was in my blood sugars from having foods at home versus eating out. So things like that. So I think it's a great idea.

[00:09:31] As far as, you know, getting a machine specifically in Europe, I think really the same brands that are available in North America are the ones that are available here. You probably shouldn't have a hard time getting one here, but if you decide to scope out near you, you might actually get a better deal in North America at Costco than you will even in Europe at most pharmacies. So maybe look at that. Maybe think about getting it at home before you even come, and getting it connected at home.

[00:09:58] Remember that, for for some of them, you have to calibrate. So you will have to use a blood glucose monitor, like the finger prick one, to calibrate if you want to make sure that you're getting accurate numbers. So you do want to test your CGM once you get that sensor put in your arm, or wherever else you choose to put it in, okay? So I don't know, but somehow I'm thinking that getting it done at home, if you have a chance to get it at home, might not be a bad idea. I don't know that it's significantly cheaper in Europe. I actually don't think that it is. I wonder, Megan, do you know?

Megan [00:10:36] Well, I have a feeling that this individual's American. So the costs, like through insurance, is wild, right? So a DexCom CGM. I have a DexCom. A DexCom in Canada straight from the company is around \$300 a month, Canadian, \$299. 1 USD right now is about 70 cents Canadian. So for American friends who just want to pay out of pocket, that's not a bad idea. In the US though, if you were to go through your doctor, get a prescription for a DexCom, it's 800 US dollars a month...

Nadia [00:11:14] Wow.

Megan [00:11:15] ...for a DexCom. But there are some really great companies in the US that are making it more accessible. So until recently, if you were not a type two diabetic that your doctor would approve for, write a prescription, and it could go through insurance, you could not get a DexCom unless you knew somebody or had connections. It was really tough. But there are these companies coming out that are great that are making them accessible to people without diabetes or don't qualify for it because they've got

pre-diabetes, for example. And they're making them really economical, but you do have to make commitments to them.

[00:11:51] So in the US, there's a company called Signos that's making the DexCom available for individuals for as low as \$150 a month. Now, I believe that's with a one year commitment, though, and if you want, it could be \$200 a month for a six-month commitment. You don't have to go through your doctor. You don't have to go through insurance. And it is significantly cheaper than going that route anyways at \$150 a month. It's a really great deal. So that is now how I get my DexCom and how my husband gets his DexCom. Now, Signos only approves you if you don't have diabetes. So just a word of caution there. The diabetics should have coverage through their insurance, hopefully.

[00:12:34] Now, with the Freestyle Libre one, there's a company called Nutriense for very similar price points. You can make one-month, three-month, six-month, twelve-month, various types of commitments. It reduces your costs as well. You get a couple of coaching sessions to learn a little bit more about the CGM and what it means. I think they're slightly a little bit more expensive than Signos, but you can get the Freestyle Libre from them.

[00:13:02] So I mean, these prices are on par with Canadian prices, if not better, and I don't think you're going to find a much better deal in Europe. I know Europe and Canada are very similar and pricing, to a certain extent, and like Nadia said, very cheap at Costco. I just actually put in a new DexCom. I had a new transmitter and a new sensor sent to me the other day, and those readings are wild for the first 48 hours. You're literally puncturing yourself and at a puncture site, there's going to be inflammation. Your sugars are going to be higher as a result for the healing. So it's really great to get something like a Keto Mojo or an Accu-Chek and calibrate it for the first 48 hours. The DexCom I have, the sensor's good for ten days, but for two of those ten days it's not really accurate. So I check my glucose level about four times a day for the first 48 hours and then for eight days I don't really need to check it again. I might do some periodic spot checks if I think something looks kind of off, but usually the DexCom is actually pretty good after those first 48 hours. I've only had the odd couple where I got some really wonky, wonka-doodle kind of numbers. So that's just something to keep in mind.

[00:14:20] So yeah, especially if you're traveling, I would still throw your Accu-Chek, your Keto Mojo, or whatever you've got in your bag so you don't get discouraged. I imagine when you go to Europe you're going to be eating differently. In Italy and France there's lots of great, you know, lower-carb options there too, if that's a diet you follow, but your diet will be different. And unless you've got that way to calibrate for the first 48 hours, you're not going to know if it's because of your diet or if it's because of your device. And that might affect how you make certain food choices. So it's good to just do a spot check a few times a day for those first 48 hours.

Nadia [00:14:57] Yeah, that's exactly what I was thinking about calibrating the machine and just being away. And it's so funny how I sometimes forget how things are different in different countries and how even within North America, the US and Canada can be quite different. So good luck with that. I do know that you can get, like Megan said, good thing that you can get some of these online in the US now. But I do know that in Europe, because I get ads for these all the time, I do know that you can easily order them and they are, as Megan said, the prices are pretty similar to the prices in Canada. So, you know, about \$150 or \$160, or higher, closer to \$200 or euros (I often get things in euros) a month for two sensors, okay? So it is available. So even if it isn't available to you in North

America (but Megan just gave you some good recommendations there), then you can definitely get it here and then test it out.

[00:15:53] Well, since, Megan, you answered question number two pretty much. How about I get question number three?

[00:16:00] "Are there any other tests that can be beneficial to have for a woman? I've been having a lot of problems with my hormones, specifically a low level of testosterone, and I'm tired of going to doctors who seem to only do tests and tell me things are okay without cross-referencing hormone levels or looking at them by taking into consideration other tests. I'm at the point where I want to become my own doctor as far as monitoring my glucose and hormone levels."

[00:16:27] Wow. I definitely can relate (and many people listening can relate) to how frustrated you are. And so it sounds like you're looking for either tests that you can do on your own, possibly monitors like we were just talking about like a CGM, or something that can help you monitor your own levels. That's a pretty tough situation to be in and pretty frustrating to be in. I often say this because I think this is, you know, this is really, really important, is that, as people, we are often looking for a diagnosis. We're searching for a diagnosis of something because we will feel better, or we feel like if we know what the problem is and we can find a solution to our particular problem.

[00:17:11] I think that, you know, it's really important that we look... And I know how frustrating it can be sometimes, depending on your relationship with your particular doctor, how frustrating that relationship can be. But it's really important that you, you know, first of all, search out if it's within your realm of possibilities, that you find a doctor that can do all the things that you wish that he or she would do and that you have a good relationship with that doctor. Keeping in mind, of course, that there are limitations to what a doctor can and cannot do everywhere in the world. We were just talking about Canada versus the US versus Europe.

[00:17:46] I find that here in Europe, I have a pretty easy time talking to my doctors and asking for them to do whatever tests I want, but that's really because I've built a really great relationship in the doctor that I have. If you're in the US, for example, it's really important that you try to find the doctor that you can have a good relationship with and that you also foster that relationship okay?

[00:18:07] Now, as far as checking for things that you can do on your own and tests that you can do on your own, I can think of, of course, a CGM is something that you can often check. People will check either a breath ketone monitor or blood ketone monitor and use that. You can often order (And I think you can do this in most countries. Canada, not so much. Much more so in the US.), you can look online for tests that you can order online and you can decide, you know, what test you want to look at.

[00:18:39] What you want to ask yourself is, are you going to test for things that you can solve? You know, are you going to test for something specific? For example, testosterone. If your testosterone is low, you know, what is the solution that you're going to find to that? Is this something that you're going to be able to prescribe or find somebody that can prescribe for you?

[00:18:58] So I just don't want to send people out and give you the impression that you have to go out there and test a million things because really what we're looking to do is

find, okay, what is my problem? What is my metabolic problem or insulin resistance problem? And what is the solution to that problem?

[00:19:15] I often talk about my five pillars because these are the five things that I feel like are within your control. You know, you can control how often you eat. You can control what time you eat, the foods that you eat and even your stress and sleep management. I really want to advise you to, you know, find a good doctor, somebody that you're comfortable with. Definitely have a look at signs and symptoms. Don't overlook signs and symptoms. You know, often I have people say, "Well, I have hair loss," or, "I have post-menopausal bleeding." Don't overlook these signs and symptoms. Go to your doctor. Tell them what your symptoms are. You know, do your regular checkups. Don't skip checkups.

[00:19:55] But I also don't know that you want to necessarily go out there and be doing tests on your own that you may not be able to to even understand. I understand what you mean about becoming your own doctor and I do think that you should be your own advocate for your health, but you do definitely want to have a really good doctor on your side, somebody who can help you monitor your hormone levels and your glucose levels. Okay?

[00:20:21] We work with somebody. I know I have. I know Megan has and a lot of other people have within our Community. We work with some functional medical doctors that are really great and will look at your hormone levels and maybe will look outside of the box a little bit. So that's definitely something you can look into as well. You can ask for some referrals to functional medical doctors that might be willing to look at, for example, your adrenal health and everything else.

[00:20:46] Outside of that, here are some recommendations that I have for you that you may not be considering. As a woman (and you're asking, specifically, as a woman), I think there's a few things that are, you know, very important. I often talk about your menstrual cycle as being a really good sort of reflection of your overall health. So if you're a young woman, which I believe that you are, that is still in your reproductive years, you definitely want to look at your cycle. Journal. I've said that I think in the last few episodes, I said that a couple of times. Make sure that you're journaling your symptoms. Make sure that you're journaling your menstrual cycle. Having a regular menstrual cycle is something that you should either have or be aiming to have. So looking at your metabolic health, how you can improve your metabolic health (yes, through fasting and diet) so that you can have a regular menstrual cycle, okay?

[00:21:39] So these are the signs and, outside of lab things, these are things that you can look at. Your skin, you know, how's your skin? Do you have acne, for example? And again, I'm talking about symptoms that are very common and that are very frequent in women that have hormonal concerns, and at the same time have metabolic and insulin-resistant concerns. Okay? So looking at acne - acne is a really, really good indicator that something might be off. Your skin is a really good indicator. You know, it's one big large organ in your body that you can look at. There's many other indications on your skin that you may have insulin resistance and other concerns related to insulin resistance. There's a very common concern, skin condition, called acanthosis nigricans which is this dark, velvety, patchy skin that many women have when they have insulin resistance.

[00:22:34] So looking outside of the labs is what I'm trying to say, looking at signs and symptoms that you do have insulin resistance and metabolic concerns. Looking at your central periphery, okay? So your waist circumference - measuring that. So things outside

of lab. Everything, I think that is in lab, I would highly recommend that you either find a really good doctor that you trust and/or a functional medical doctor that can help you figure out which lab tests you should be doing and what they mean, and helping you analyze them and possibly getting the right prescriptions.

[00:23:11] All right, Megan, do you want to tackle the last question?

Megan [00:23:13] Sure. The next question asks, "Before a holiday event, should I do an extended fast or should I fat fast? I'm not quite sure, and my weekends are just full of parties"

[00:23:29] It's a really good question that a lot of people are struggling with and asking us in our Community at this particular time of the year. The next three weeks are just weeks and weekends of events and parties and eating. Whether you should do some longer, more intensive fasts on the weekdays leading up to weekends, or whether you should do some fat fasting, I think really depends upon your stress level. Holidays, albeit the most wonderful time of the year for many of us, it's important to understand that good things come along with stress, too. We don't think of that.

[00:24:07] We usually associate stress with really negative emotions, but planning a wedding to the love of your life is stressful. Having your son marry the girl of his dreams is stressful for a mom or dad. Planning to go on that dream European vacation - it's stressful to get organized for that. Having a new baby or a new grandbaby is stressful. So all of these wonderful things that we are looking forward to still provide us with stress. So stress can be associated with positive emotions, too. And for many of us, that's what we are experiencing in the holidays when we've got all of these parties or are connecting with our community.

[00:24:50] Now, I do understand that the holidays are a very difficult time for a lot of individuals, too, so I'm really sort of leaning into this question about the individual as having a lot of these holiday parties. But regardless of the cause of your stress, whether it's from sort of sad emotions going into the holidays or just excited emotions going into the holidays, if your stress is high, then this is the time to do a fat fast because it will help keep your appetite and your hormones at bay and prevent you from over eating foods that you'd rather not consume during this particular time of the year.

[00:25:30] Now, if you're not experiencing any types of stressors, regardless, and the holidays are easy peasy for you. Maybe your sister-in-law's throwing Christmas dinner and you've just got to show up with the kids, nothing too stressful, not a lot of travel, then, by all means, go ahead and do some more intensive fasting. Or if you have a very low key holiday season, do some intensive fasting.

[00:25:54] So if you're experiencing stress this holiday season, regardless, whether it's running around to get to these events or it's a difficult time of year, then you should focus on fat fasting and using that as your holding pattern to maintain throughout the difficult times and to control the hormones and your appetite as best as you can. But if everything is pretty relaxed, then by all means get in some intensive fasting before any of the holiday meals. So remember - during the holidays, you can still maintain and you can still make progress. If life is stressful, though, it's going to make it a little bit more difficult to make progress. So sometimes we're striving for overall progress and not perfection and just maintaining with a good holding pattern. Nadia is our queen at The Fasting Method of the

holding pattern and explaining it, but it's my understanding that she thinks fat fasting can be a great holding pattern during stressful periods, as well.

Nadia [00:26:56] Absolutely.

Megan [00:26:57] Well, thank you, everybody, again for your patience as we plow through these questions. We look forward to being able to answer more of them during various episode types this season. And we will catch you back here next week with another episode of The Fasting Method podcast. Bye for now.

Nadia [00:27:15] Bye, everyone.