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**Megan** [00:00:06] Hi everyone. It's Megan Ramos here with another episode of The Fasting Method podcast. Today I'm joined by my lovely co-host, Dr. Nadia Pateguana. Nadia, how are you doing?

**Nadia** [00:00:16] Doing great, Megan. How about you?

**Megan** [00:00:18] Doing well, thank you. We've got one of our favorite types of episodes today, our Q&A episodes, where we get to answer our listeners' questions. So let's get this party started because we've got a lot of questions to go through today. Nadia, do you want to kick us off with the first one?

**Nadia** [00:00:37] Absolutely. And what a good one it is. So this person says, "I have been fasting on and off for years and had moments of great weight-loss success, but it seems like as soon as I stop I put the weight back on, regardless of how well I'm eating. Am I just fated to have to continue fasting forever to keep my weight down?"

[00:00:58] I think this is a great question because, number one, it's one that we often ask ourselves, especially when we start fasting. I think it's one that we've addressed in many different ways. Even in a recent podcast, Megan addressed this when she talked about TRE and the critical importance of TRE (time-restricted eating). I think that we often look at fasting when we first start as what it also is, which is healing, therapeutic in healing. But when people join our Community and people in the intermittent fasting world, over time, you start to look at fasting as a way of eating, a lifestyle, and it becomes easier and easier as it goes. Having said that, I do think that our fasting protocols and our fasting plans are different if you're trying to lose weight, they're different if you're already in maintenance. And so I think one of the things that I often find is that people, some people, especially when they learn how to do this, are really, really good at fasting for weight loss, but I think that people, because you haven't gotten there yet, have a hard time with maintenance. And within our Community, we're working quite a bit on this because so many of our clients fortunately have gotten to their goal, have gotten to their goal weight, or ideal body composition.

[00:02:20] And so it's really important that we do talk about this - maintenance. And sometimes, even within your weight-loss journey, you do have time, periods of time, where you have to do what I often call 'practice maintenance' or a 'holding pattern' because you're not in a place or a time in your life where you can do the weight-loss protocol. So you do have to learn how to sort of maintain your gains, your losses in this case, your weight loss, during your journey. So this is where the critical importance of TRE - time-restricted eating - comes in. You mention here that no matter how well you're eating, you still gain weight. What that likely tells me is that during these periods of time, these holding patterns in-between your weight loss journey, when you're not doing your weight-loss fasting schedules, which is very likely an alternate-day type pattern. So when you're not doing that, when you're doing a few eating days in a row or for a long period of time, a few weeks, maybe, maybe you're on holiday or maybe you're going through a more stressful period in your life where you're not doing longer fasts, you're having a hard time maintaining your weight because even though you're probably eating, as you said, all the 'right things', quote-unquote, how you're eating is ultimately important. So do I think that you have to continue fasting forever? I think that most of us want to continue fasting forever. It's just the idea of what kind of fast are you doing. And that's what I mean by the

critical importance of TRE, time-restricted eating. No matter what you're eating, always focus on \*how\* you're eating, how often you're eating, what time you're eating.

[00:03:59] So it's the snacking and grazing, again, I'm a big fan of repetition, so I appreciate the opportunity to repeat this. So if you're having a hard time maintaining your weight loss, whether you're already at goal or if you're doing a bit of a holding pattern in between your, at certain phases of your weight loss journey, focus on full meals, no snacks. Really understand the critical importance of TRE - the idea that the snacking and grazing is adding to your insulin resistance, it's adding to your obesity concern, or weight gain concern. So again, it's great that you're choosing all these wonderful foods, but every single time that you eat, whether it's a good food or a bad food, high carb, low carb, high calorie, low calorie. Every single time that we eat, snack, graze we're raising that insulin and that higher insulin leads to more and more insulin resistance and you're more likely to put weight back on.

[00:04:57] So when you're not doing the longer fasts and when you get to your weight goal or when you're in a phase of your life, a stage where you're not doing the weight-loss protocols, then focus on full meals, no snacks. I mean, I cannot overemphasize the importance of TRE.

[00:05:15] What do you think about that, Megan?

**Megan** [00:05:17] Absolutely. Anybody who slips back in maintenance mode, myself included, it's always because grazing gets in. COVID - huge for me. I ate perfectly. You could not have bought better quality foods, healthier foods, but I was home, we were in lockdown initially for 13 weeks back in Toronto. I was living there at the time and it just made it really easy to graze on the good meats and chopped vegetables and all of this stuff. And I quickly packed on a bit of weight. So that is everybody's downfall. We've got to cut the snacking. Food is so easy and accessible, it's tough, but you've got to... That's the one thing - if you want to maintain, you've got to be disciplined with that. And if you are struggling at losing weight, you know, you've really got to think about your eating days because the answer's not always to fast for several days, or five days. Often, you need to take a look at your eating days. And the bottom line is for everybody, maintaining always comes down to TRE. So it's important.

[00:06:24] Now the next question is not one that we typically answer during one of these episodes. It's a little bit more on the medical side of things. But I think this particular question does warrant a little bit of discussion.

[00:06:38] This listener shared, "My doctor wants me to start taking metformin, but I would like to incorporate fasting to bring down my A1C, which is currently 7.1%. What are the benefits, if any, of using metformin for someone who's just starting on their fasting journey? Can you even take metformin on fasting days?"

[00:07:01] In general, metformin does have some benefits. For example, it's really well known for reducing incidence of metabolic-related cancers. It doesn't have many side effects at all, especially serious side effects, but it is notoriously known for creating gastric distress. So while it's great at boosting insulin sensitivity, and you don't have to worry about things like amputation or cancers or hypoglycemia like you would on many of the other diabetic medications (there are some really gnarly side effects out there), it can really upset your stomach. So, that leads to the question, "Well, you know, if it upsets my stomach, I should probably take it with food, shouldn't I?" And if you read any prescription

bottle of metformin from the pharmacy, you'll see, "Take with meal, take with meal. Take this dosage with each meal," or, "...with these meals." There is a very direct, direct messaging instructions there on the bottle.

[00:08:09] Now, when Jason and I had our clinic in Toronto, we would always see how an individual did with metformin on an empty stomach. I mean, metformin is going to be the most effective with a meal. It works when you eat, doesn't necessarily work so much when you don't eat, but it's not exactly moot either. So there are some benefits to taking metformin, even outside of a mealtime. So we would always just see how the patient did on metformin on their fasting days. And Jason would give very specific instructions about these are your eating day medications, these are your fasting day medications. And if you experience x, y, or z on your eating days, well, then it's, you know, this is what you should do with your medication. So we would always see if a person could tolerate metformin on their fasting days. If they could, great because it could help with their sugars a bit and it meant that they maybe didn't need to take some other medications till their sugars came down enough that they wouldn't need medication on their fasting days. But if the person couldn't tolerate it on their fasting days, then it would be something reserved for their eating days. And Jason would make the decision as to whether or not they could forgo diabetic medications on their fasting days, or if they should add in something else on their fasting days if the sugars were running too high because we definitely don't want the sugars running that high. So there were different factors there, but metformin can be really, really awful on an empty stomach and for some individuals, they do have high blood sugar levels and they don't really want to take anything else.

[00:09:55] So there are some ways to get creative, to be able to take metformin when you are fasting. One of them is to have a couple of tablespoons of either chia seeds or psyllium husks in a glass of water, say 8 to 16 ounces of water, adding 1 to 2 tablespoons of either of these fiber sources. You would add the fiber source to the water, let it sit for about 30 minutes. It will form this jelly-like solution. Not necessarily the most palatable texture, but not awful. And you would take that, and about 30 minutes later you could take the medication. And we would do this for not just metformin usage, but for other medications or supplements that needed to be taken on fasting days, but with food.

[00:10:44] Another alternative that we would always recommend as well is a cup of leafy greens. A cup of leafy greens with a little bit of vinegar really is not going to disrupt your fast very much at all. And it's not like you're going to be grazing on leafy greens like a bunny on your fasting day, you're going to be sitting down having about a cup of leafy greens, being able to take your medication and move on.

[00:11:08] So there were some of these aids that we would utilize to help people so they would be able to take their metformin on their fasting days. There's also a slow-release metformin as well, which tends to serve people a lot better if they do have sensitivity to it, and also perhaps minimize the number of times a day that they need to take it. Even then, some people are not invincible. Metformin, in general, can also help with ovulation. So I'm a 37, almost 38-year-old woman who's starting a family and I ovulate like a clock, but when you're ready to start a family, you're willing to do everything under the sun. Like if someone told me I had to stand on my head for 30 minutes a day, I'd probably try to figure out a way to stand on my head for 30 minutes of the day. So you tend to do some irrational things and this hormonal expert suggested to me that I take metformin to ultra triple, quadruple, ensure that I'm ovulating, even though I have a great history of always ovulating. So I took it, and I took the slow release one, and I got so sick you could not pay me to take that stuff ever, ever again. And I took it on eating days because I was, again, trying to conceive and

it was just the worst on an eating day. So metformin is not necessarily a medication for everybody, but, you know, we definitely don't want the sugars running high and sometimes the fasting can take a while to see them come back down, and metformin is often the lesser of the evils if you can tolerate it.

[00:12:46] Nadia, I know you've got a bit of an experience with metformin yourself. I don't know if you want to share with our listeners?

**Nadia** [00:12:52] Yeah, absolutely. So as Megan said, these are not the kind of questions that we usually focus on, right.? We are not here to give you medical advice. Rather, we want to give you fasting advice. However, this is one that both Megan and I thought we should share with you our own personal experiences. I just picked up the book that Dr. Fung and I wrote together - The PCOS Plan - because I wanted to find the page where we actually talk about metformin. So for those of you that have The PCOS Plan, on page 88, there's our, you know, quick summary of metformin and it's actually quite positive. Like Megan said, you know, the most common side effect to metformin is gastrointestinal discomfort, like Megan had. And I took metformin in the past and I've actually taken it again and I do not have this GI discomfort, but I personally do not take metformin on my fasting days because I don't need to, my sugars don't run high at all anymore. So I wouldn't want to take metformin on my fasting days, but on my eating days, with a meal, I do quite well. I do not have that discomfort, but I know how common it can be. So if you're somebody that for whatever reason you want to sort of, like Megan said, just for that sort of extra punch, want to take the metformin because your doctor recommended it, because you, you know, you think that you're still at a point where you would benefit from it, then make sure that you're taking it with a meal, see how you do. And if you need an alternative, then look into a supplement called Inositol, which is very commonly used by women with PCOS and even men with insulin resistance. So it's similar and it has a similar benefit. So look into those two and really just do what works for you. I have taken it with success. I did, like Megan just mentioned, I did take it for improved fertility. I believe it was very helpful to me and lots of women with PCOS have taken it at certain points in their journey. Or the natural supplement, which is the Inositol.

**Megan** [00:14:57] I take Inositol and I make my husband take it because we're in our family planning [laughter] and it's good for both of us, but it's also just really good for insulin resistance in general. And so, I mean, that might be something that you want to talk to your doctor about. Berberine, too, is something. You know, when my dad, who never listened to me, despite being a smart man and believing in me, got diagnosed with type 2 diabetes. You know, the messaging was, "The doctor gave me a prescription, but I told her and the next 90 days before my next blood work, I'm going to bring it down anyways." So he came to an understanding with his doctor and did his fasting and used things like vinegar and berberine. He's not an Inositol guy, but it makes a big difference. So, you know, I would just chat with your doctor. It's not necessarily even common practice to recommend diabetic medication with an A1C of 7.1 anymore, so I would just chat with them and see if you can maybe do your own 30 to 90-day trial there.

**Nadia** [00:16:07] All right, Megan, so the next question is, "Every fast is different. Why is that? I have been experiencing euphoria and loads of energy while fasting, and fasting has been wonderful. And I have also been down, tired, and with no energy while fasting. I'm thinking that the answer could have something to do with water and electrolytes. What can I do to optimize the fast and feel euphoric more often?".

[00:16:31] This is a great question and you are so right. Every fast is different and it's very likely, one of the main reasons for sure is your hydration status. So hopefully most of you recognize that while we fast we are not only not taking in enough electrolytes, like salt and magnesium, because we're not eating. So we're not getting enough electrolytes, or any, from our food, but we're also losing these electrolytes while we're fasting because as our insulin levels drop, as they start to lower, we go into this release mode, which is great. We go into this fat-burning mode which causes, of course, further release of not just water, but water and these essential electrolytes, like salt in magnesium.

[00:17:19] So while you're fasting, you really do need to hydrate properly and that means not only drinking enough water, but taking in enough salt and magnesium. Those are the two electrolytes that we recommend. Not only taking in enough salt and magnesium, but taking it in appropriately, making sure that your body is actually absorbing and that you're not taking too much at a time or too little. And if you're exercising, as we've mentioned in other podcasts, then you even need a little bit of extra hydration while fasting, more water and more electrolytes. So we do have a lot of really, really great resources on this. We talk about this all the time in our videos and our meetings. And so within our Community, within our resources, you can find some great info on how much salt to take, how to take salt, how much magnesium to take, and how to take magnesium, how much water to drink. And that's going to be very individual so don't be shocked and surprised if you find that you have to do a little bit of tweaking, okay? You might have to try out different types of magnesium, you might have to play with the amounts a little bit. Magnesium is one of those fun things where you can get it in orally, you can get it in topically, you can take amazing, relaxing Epsom salt baths to make sure that you're getting in some extra magnesium and help with your relaxation and sleep as well, etc., etc... So you're probably, you're not only probably, but you're spot on that, depending on how much electrolytes you're taking and depending on your hydration status, your fasts are going to feel totally different.

[00:18:52] Now, there are other things, of course, that will impact how your fasts feel. Sometimes we can figure out why a fast feels better than another fast, but sometimes we cannot. But let me tell you some of the things that we have found are true for most people. If you don't sleep well the night before, then your next day, your fast is going to be a lot more challenging. So, you know, working on your sleep, improving your sleep as much as you can, that's one of the things that's going to make your fast a lot easier. And the reason for this is because of, of course, our stress hormones. And so, again, if you're going through a more stressful period, fasting is going to be a lot more challenging. So you really want to learn and work on cortisol-lowering techniques as much as you can and all the time. That helps a lot with your fast. So learning some stress-management techniques and doing these all the time, that's going to make your fast easier. It's just as important as your hydration status.

[00:19:52] Some of the other things that might, will, not might, will definitely impact your fasting day is what you ate the day before. So the days that you eat a more real-food diet, a more whole-food diet, the following day is going to feel like it's a lot easier to fast. If you follow an eating day, a very highly-processed food type of eating day, with a fast that fast following, eating more carbs, more sugar, more processed foods, is going to feel harder. You're going to have a lot more symptoms that people will often call the 'keto flu'. And then this does have a lot to do with dehydration. So if you're going from a higher insulin state, so after eating these higher-processed, higher-carb foods to then fasting, you're going to have much more of a drop. And that drop is going to feel pretty lousy. So a really good idea is to have a really good eating day before your fasts, and on and on. So there are

many different reasons why some fasting days feel better than others, but there's a lot that you can do to make your fasting days feel better and better, and great more often than not. Anything you'd like to add to that, Megan?

**Megan** [00:21:06] No, I think you covered it all pretty well. I can't tell our listeners enough the number of five-day fasts I've started that ended up being like 20 hours, and the number of 24-hour fasts I've done that have ended up being a few days, if not longer. Sometimes you gotta roll with it a lot of time. So many factors are in your control, like Nadia talked about, and some of them just aren't in your control. The thing that you need to remember is that the great thing about fasting is that, while you need to look at it as a therapeutic treatment, you've still got some flexibility with it too. So I don't tell everybody, and even myself, I don't try to be a superhero. If one day is not going well, then you can have a meal and you can always start another fast and maybe that one will go a lot better, and sometimes that's all it takes. That and a good night's sleep.

[00:22:02] All right. The next question, I think I could probably do a whole episode, Nadia and I, but I'll do my best to keep it, keep it concise, everyone.

[00:22:12] "Have you ever had someone gain weight while fasting? Are there common mistakes that people make if this is the case?"

[00:22:18] Answer number one is, yes, we have had people that have gained weight while fasting. What are the common mistakes? The first one is people just not really doing therapeutic levels of fasting. So individuals doing 14, 16, 18 hours of fasting with insulin resistance and expecting that to result in significant weight loss. It's not enough of fasting to be therapeutic for an individual with a lot of insulin resistance. People with a few extra pounds, people with some mild insulin issues, people who aren't quite there on the insulin issue spectrum yet, those shorter fasts can actually be very therapeutic for them. But for most individuals, you're not going to find that fasting strategy to be very effective. So it's better to focus on doing more of the 24, 36, 42s if you can.

[00:23:17] Now, this leads me to the second point. The second reason why people gain weight when they fast is they do what we call 'traditional OMAD'. So OMAD is short for 'one meal a day', which does equate to a 24-hour fast. And 'traditional' means that they are doing the 24-hour fast, so they're, say, always eating the same meal day in and day out. So what happens is eventually for individuals, doing a 24-hour fast becomes dirt easy, but sometimes fasting for longer periods of time proves to be too much. So they say, "Well, if I can't always seem to do those longer intermittent fasts, like the overnight 36-hour fast, I'm just going to do a whole bunch of 24-hour fasts," and then they end up doing the same thing day in and day out, which we call 'traditional OMAD' - every day they're just eating dinner. And our bodies adapt to this style of eating, and when an adaptation occurs, fat loss stops to happen. And, in many ways, this then begins to mimic calorie-restriction dieting in the body because if the body adapts to it, then we're not going to activate the fasting state. The fasting state is technically activated in the body when we engage our sympathetic nervous system and start to produce these counter-regulatory hormones that liberate our body fat, maintain our resting metabolic rate, produce the hormones we need to perform gluconeogenesis and human growth hormone, which also helps us liberate fuel and body fat, but can also help us maintain our lean mass. So if we don't get the activation of the sympathetic nervous system, we're not necessarily activating in that fasted state. So that will happen with adaptation. So if you're just doing one meal a day every 20 to 24 hours, your body's going to adapt, you're not going to get that activation of the sympathetic nervous system, the fasted state is not going to truly begin and then you start to slip into

some calorie restriction territory there. So this traditional OMAD style, it works short-term, but after a month you're going to stop losing weight, and within a couple of months you'll start gaining weight.

[00:25:31] So we like to mix us up with what we call 'non-traditional OMAD'. If you're going to eat one meal a day, sure, but vary that meal - some days eat lunch, some days eat dinner, alternate between the two, throw in some breakfast every now and then to really confuse the body. But confusion is key to keeping weight loss going and that sympathetic nervous system being activated.

[00:25:52] Other issues - too many training wheels on your fasting days. Measure out that cream that you're putting in your tea or coffee. Are you having more than a few teaspoons? You'd be surprised if you actually measured it out. So you should be having these fasting training wheels, like fatty tea and fatty coffee, if you need them, but not if you don't. So this is often a huge issue.

[00:26:13] And then just to not sound like a broken record, but the whole theme of TRE on your eating days. You can't be snacking and grazing all day long, even on good foods - things like cheese and nuts and olives and those type of things. And meat, you've got to keep it to your meals. So we introduce this concept of 'mini fasting' that we talk a lot about in our Community, and you do want to be getting in fasting in between your meals. You just don't want to have this big 6 to 8-hour food fest on your eating days because that's when your quote-unquote 'meal timing' is. In some rare cases, we do see things like severe nutrient deficiencies be problematic. This often occurs in the population that follows a very strict plant-based diet where they might not be getting all of the nutrients they need. So if that's the case, we'll do some micronutrient testing and supplement, or alter the diet to make sure that they're getting in all of the nutrients that they need.

[00:27:16] Nadia, any other situations or mistakes where you see people starting to pack on the pounds during their fast?

**Nadia** [00:27:25] No, I think you've covered the major ones. Of course, like you said, we could do a whole Hot Topic just on this, but I think you covered the main things. I cannot overemphasize enough the critical importance of TRE, no matter what you're eating. You know, I don't like to categorize foods as good or bad, not even as high carb, low carb, high calorie, low calorie. I like to focus on how we're eating on both our eating days and, of course, then if you're inadvertently raising insulin on your fasting days. So I think that that's, you've covered all of that really well.

**Megan** [00:27:59] Thanks, Nadia, I appreciate it. And thanks to everybody who sent in their questions. If you have them, we want to hear them. Shoot them over to [podcast@thefastingmethod.com](mailto:podcast@thefastingmethod.com).

[00:28:10] And I want to let you all know, too, about something really cool Nadia has coming up. Nadia is actually going to be leading a Woman and Fasting masterclass in May. Sign up for it now. Seats are limited so we look forward to seeing you in a masterclass. Nadia is going to cover all of the topics for women of all age groups, really optimizing fat-loss strategies and hormonal regulation. So head over to [thefastingmethod.com](http://thefastingmethod.com) to learn more, everyone.

[00:28:42] And have a great day. Happy fasting.

**Nadia** [00:28:45] Bye everyone.