

Fasting for Health

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Introduction

Wild animals fast when they are sick. Refusing to eat is the instinct of self-preservation in which the life energy, otherwise used in digesting and assimilating food, is concentrated at the site of the injury or sickness to remove waste products, thus purifying and healing the body (Bragg & Bragg, 1999). We, as humans, have this kind of instinct too. We usually do not have the desire to eat when we feel sick. That is the body's signal for us to stop eating and use the energy to cleanse and heal the body itself. The father of medicine, Hippocrates stated:

Everyone has a doctor in him or her; we just have to help it in its work. The natural healing force within each one of us is the greatest force in getting well. Our food should be our medicine. Our medicine should be our food. But to eat when you are sick is to feed your sickness (www.fasting.com).

Joel Fuhrman, the author of *Fasting and Eating for Health* says, "Fasting is based on unchanging biological laws that insist the cause of disease must be removed..." (www.fasting.com).

Fasting is a health and religious practice that has been employed since the time of ancient civilization. Ancient Egyptians, Mongolians, and Syrians believed that fasting preserved their health and prolonged both youthfulness and life. Egyptians clearly recognized that excessive eating caused diseases in their lives. One Egyptian pyramid inscription says, "humans lives on one-quarter of what they eat; on the other three-quarters lives their doctor" (cited in www.fasting.com). This ancient knowledge can be applied to modern people.

Along with fasting, the ancient Greeks made a practice of "sleeping off" all types of illness. Their hospitals were known as "Temples of Sleep" and patients were kept resting during their entire recovery period. Actually patients went through the fasting cure and the digestive organs received needed rest (Ehret, 1966). Also, in ancient times, fasting was used to detoxify the body and purify the mind to reach a complete natural health. Indeed, the Greek philosopher, Pythagoras, required his disciples to

undertake a 40-day fast before he would teach them his philosophy. He claimed that only after a fast of 40 days, the minds of his disciples could be sufficiently purified and clarified to understand the profound teachings of the mysteries of life (Bragg & Bragg 1999).

The founders of the modern world's four major religions – Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, and Islam – taught disciples that fasting is a means of communicating with the Divine through purification of body, mind, and spirit (Bragg & Bragg 1999; www.fasting.com). In the rest of our history, fasting has remained a religious practice.

However, early in the 20th century, fasting was rediscovered as a health practice and, with support from the medical community, became extremely popular. This may be due to the fact that modern people have become more aware of the harm of modern lifestyles and the polluted environment and have recognized the need of internal detoxification for both curing and preventing diseases.

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Toxic Intake and Detoxification

Toxic Intake Through the Food, the Air, and the Water

Although the old saying “you are what you eat” has been ignored for long time in our civilization, scientific facts have begun to prove that most chronic diseases are due to bad eating habits. The American standard diet still consists of high cholesterol, fatty food, high protein food, refined and processed low vitality food, and junk food with preservatives and chemical additives. All of these foods, without proper enzymes and fibers, place a tremendous burden on the digestive systems and are accumulated as toxic wastes. Every kind of meat, including fish, contains the wastes of its cells or drugs and requires the digestive organs to work even harder. When the unhealthy diet is combined with caffeine, nicotine, and alcohol, our body responds adversely.

To avoid accumulating toxic waste materials in our body, organic vegetables, fruits, nuts and seeds are recommended as our main foods (Bragg & Bragg 1999; Burroughs, 1976; Ehret, 1966). However, unfortunately in these days, even vegetarians need to be careful to pick out food to avoid health risks associated with eating. Many varieties of deadly chemicals are sprayed in the air to kill insects in crop fields and on already mature fruits and vegetables to extend their shelf life in groceries. Deadly poisons sprayed on crops include chlorinated hydrocarbons, pesticides, herbicides, and fungicides. Environmentalists, farm workers, and federal agencies have argued about “safe levels” of the 20,000 registered pesticides (Galland, 1998). Moreover, other phosphorus and toxic compounds in fertilizers and weed killers are absorbed by mature crops and become part of them. We cannot wash or

peel off these chemicals. Also it has been proven that fruits and vegetables grown in chemically treated soil severely lack proper vital mineral and vitamin contents. (Bragg & Bragg, 1999; Ehret, 1966; Galland, 1998).

Air pollution is a real and serious threat to our health. Especially in modern big cities, people breathe air containing soot and smoke from factories, incinerators and power plants; gaseous by-products of industry; and toxic exhaust from cars and trucks. Our water supply is so filthy that more strong toxic chemicals such as chlorine are used to make it drinkable. However, these same chemicals that “cleanse our drinking water” can be accumulated in the body’s tissues to cause health problems (Bragg & Bragg, 1999; Ehret, 1966).

Detoxification Process of Our Body

Environmental pollutants, pesticides, poisons and other waste materials from food, air, and water are neutralized and eliminated from the body by an ongoing internal detoxification process. Toxins that can be eliminated from our body are categorized in two ways: water-soluble toxins like alcohol and cocaine, and various fat-soluble chemical toxins. The latter are absorbed in our fat tissue including our cell membranes, so they are very difficult for human body to break down and eliminate (Gormley, 2000; Walsh, 1997). Under ideal circumstances, our bodies constantly perform detoxification just as the heart beats and lungs breathe. The liver, spleen, intestines, kidneys, lungs, skin, and lymphatic system do the primary work to get rid of toxins. In modern society, the bodily systems have been overrun.

The liver is especially burdened by toxins. The liver’s job is to break down toxins and excrete them into bile or blood as less harmful by-products. These by-products in the blood are filtered out by the kidneys, and by-products in the bile enter the colon and leave the body in feces (Duncan, 1996). However, when our body is overloaded with too much food and toxins, the digestion and detoxification process cannot keep up and finally loses its proper function. Eventually the colon turns into a waste dump for undigested food and toxins and also becomes a breeding ground for harmful bacteria and carcinogens while the growth of friendly bacteria, such as Lactobacilli, which help digestion, are inhibited. Kidneys also fail to filter the blood’s various toxins. The excess waste materials remain in our body. Autopsies often reveal colons that are clogged with about 80 percent waste materials, weighing ten pounds in an average person (Zucker, 1998; Ehret, 1966).

Those toxic materials do not only cause disease in the colon and kidneys, but also they can cause various diseases all over the body. When the bowel walls become crusted with unexcreted fecal matter, the proper eliminative functions are lost, causing chronic constipation. If we eat three times a day, we should have at least three bowel movements, otherwise the digestive and eliminative functions are not working sufficiently. Many toxins in our body are absorbed into the blood stream, circulated throughout the whole body, and accumulated in various parts of the body, causing aches, diseases, premature aging, and all sorts of other health problems. Health

problems associated with toxins range from “something as simple as fatigue or weight gain to serious health disorders such as arthritis, cancer and other degenerative conditions.” In fact, it has been argued that the amount of toxicity in the body has a 99 percent direct correlation with the seriousness of the body condition (Duncan, 1996; Jensen & Bell, 1998). Stanley Burroughs (1976), the author of *The Master Cleanser* says that, “[a]ll diseases, regardless of their names, come within this understanding as only varied expressions of the one disease of toxemia.”

Taking medicine and eating healthy food does not eliminate toxicity -- the fundamental cause of our health troubles. Instead, their residue remains and accumulates as extra toxins in our body. Fasting then is a way to give our body a chance to get rid of the waste materials and accumulated toxins that are unavoidable in our modern, complex civilization (Bragg & Bragg, 1999).

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Physiological Effects of Fasting

How Does Fasting Work

At the beginning, fasting achieves a physiological rest to the digestive, assimilative, and protective organs, probably the first time for most people. Next, the bodily energy normally used to digest and assimilate food is now used to purify our body. The purification process is called autolysis, or auto-digestions in which our body draws energy by decomposing and burning unused substances and metabolic wastes with the help of bacteria and enzymes. Waste materials to be decomposed, reused, and eliminated include fat and calcium deposits, atheromatous plaque, morbid accumulations, abnormal cells, dead and dying cells, damaged tissue, and various kinds of neoplasm (Burroughs, 1976; Ehret, 1966; www.fasting.com). This is the single most important phase of fasting: breaking down superfluous tissue and mobilizing the toxins from their storage areas. Non water-soluble chemicals are also transformed into relatively polar substances and then quickly excreted through enhanced cleansing ability of all the eliminative organs (Gormley, 2000).

During the auto-digestion process, because waste materials, chemicals, and toxins begin to circulate in blood stream and throughout the body, they can cause headache, nausea, and some other physical symptoms. At this point, many people quit fasting and start to eat. They blame fasting as the cause of their uncomfortable conditions. However, it is well-known fact that these symptoms will go away in few days as the elimination process progresses and fasters feel better and even stronger. Auto-digestion stops when they start to eat (Bragg & Bragg, 1999; Ehret, 1966).

One caution should be made here. Those who have been seriously ill or on heavy medications need to fast only under medical supervision because a prolonged fast can be dangerous because of the large amount of toxic substances they have to eliminate (Bragg & Bragg, 1999; Burroughs, 1976; Ehret, 1966). “Fasters who died from a long

fast did not die from lack of food, but actually suffocated in and with their own wastes” (Ehret, 1966, p47). All fasters must educate themselves to know what physical conditions occur during a fast.

Health Benefits of Fasting

The process of decomposing and eliminating waste toxic materials can improve or even cure various diseases: cardiovascular and circulatory diseases, diseases of digestive system, diseases of the locomotor system including rheumatism, respiratory system diseases including asthma, and the early stage of malignant diseases like cancer (Bragg & Bragg, 1999; Burroughs, 1976; Ehret, 1966; www.fasting.com). Stanley Burroughs (1976) says,

All mucus diseases such as colds, flu, asthma, hay fever, sinus and bronchial troubles are rapidly dissolved and eliminated from the body, leaving the user free from the varied allergies which cause difficult breathing and clogging of the sinus cavities.... The types of diseases that are a result of calcium deposits in the joints, muscles, cells, and glands are readily dissolved and removed from the body. Cholesterol deposits in the arteries and veins also respond to the cleansing power of fasting (p13).

Fasting can be used to normalize our weight. As our common sense says, weight reduction is achieved by fasting, along with other health benefits. There are many diet programs using an unbalanced diet that can be dangerous for our health. Carefully planned fasting is a natural way to normalize our body weight. Fasting dissolves all unnecessary and unnatural fat deposits all over the body and the body is relieved of a tremendous burden. When we fast for a few days, the stomach shrinks to its normal size and the hungry feeling gradually fades away. When we go back to the normal diet, we won't have exaggerated hunger and won't overeat (Bragg & Bragg, 1999).

Surprisingly enough, fasting programs can be used for underweight people who cannot gain weight even if they stuff themselves with many fattening foods. The cause of both overweight and underweight is a nutritionally unbalanced diet. “People are not nourished in proportion to amount of food they eat, but in proportion to how much they digest and assimilate” (Bragg & Bragg, 1999, p120). Thus what underweight people need is exactly what overweight people need – revitalizing the digestive and assimilative systems to work efficiently. As metabolism is improved through fasting, the body recuperates the capability to assimilate proteins, fats, carbohydrates, starches, sugars, minerals, vitamins and all other essential nutrients necessary (Bragg & Bragg, 1999).

The human body uses the skin as a secondary eliminative organ. Because conditions such as boils, abscesses, carbuncles, and pimples are the body's effort to eliminate poisons, skin problems also disappear as the rest of the body is cleansed (Burroughs, 1976). Baldness may be cured or at least prevented by pure blood that supplies the correct nourishments of the hair bed. After all the tonics have failed, we must recognize that the cause of baldness is not external and cannot be cured or prevented

externally (Ehret, 1966).

Finally, fasting can help people to break addictions to harmful substances: tobacco, drugs, alcohol, tea, coffee, and other habit-forming beverages. Fasting leads our body to get rid of stored poisons, including addictive substances, and we lose our craving and tolerance for them. Thus after fasting we will feel nausea or sometimes have attacks of vomiting, “nature’s purge” if taking addictive substances. (Bragg & Bragg, 1999; Burroughs, 1976). After I fasted for two weeks, I became very weak for alcohol. A bottle of beer was strong enough to make me very drunk. I imagine that smokers can quit or at least reduce the number of cigarettes if they go through fasting.

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Psychological and Spiritual Effects of Fasting

Psychological Effects of Fasting

The physical and psychological benefits cannot be separated. Fasting purifies cells all over the body, including those in the brain. Negative mental states such as anxiety, boredom, loneliness, tension, and fear, to the some extent, can be said as the mental expression of a physical state. When the brain is free of toxic poisons, the mind is liberated both physiologically and then psychologically. Although psychological drugs only temporarily alter the mental states by affecting the brain, fasting may free the brain forever (Bragg & Bragg, 1999). In the last 50 years in Russia, therapeutic fasting has been found to be the most effective treatment for schizophrenia. As early as 1972, Dr. Yuri Nikolayev, director of the fasting unit of the Moscow Psychiatric Institute, reported on the use of fasting to successfully treat over 7000 patients who suffered from various mental disorders including schizophrenia. Now Nikolayev after 30 year’s experience fasting over 10,000 patients says, “seventy percent of those [schizophrenia patients] treated by fasting improved so remarkably that they were able to resume an active life” (www.fasting.com).

Many fasters report that their mind is sharpened and focused. This is explained by the fact that the cleansing process of fasting actually gets rid of cementing and intrusive particles of the nerve tissues. As a result, a greater number of our brain cells come into contact with purified blood and the improved flow of blood to the brain helps to clarify our mind. An Irish literary critic and dramatist, George Bernard Shaw, attributed his successful works to the effect of fasting (www.fasting.com).

Spiritual Effects of Fasting

People fast not only for health and youth, but also for spiritual illumination. Fasting is a rite in all religions; the Bible alone has 74 references to it (Bragg & Bragg, 1999). Prolonged fasting was practiced by the Bible saints, Ahab, Anna, Esther, Hannah, Ezra, John the Baptist, the Apostles. Christ, Daniel, David, Elijah, and Moses all did 40-day fasts. Moses received the Ten Commandments after fasting for 40 days. Jesus

fasted 40 days in the desert before starting His ministry. Great religious leaders knew that abstaining from food led them to focus on God and also opened their mind for spiritual perception and understanding (www.fasting.com).

We can find Christ teaching about fasting in the Dead Sea Scroll found in 1947: “Renew yourselves and fast, for I tell you truly, except you fast you shall never be freed from the power of Satan, and from all diseases that come from Satan” Similar teachings can be found in Matthew 17: 14-21. Great saints of our history approached and some reached to “the truth” with their focused mind and spirit that were attained through asceticism including fasting, probably not only by special grace (Ehret, 1966).

In this modern world, we know that a great number of people fast for religious reasons.

For example, one billion Muslims fast daily during the entire month of Ramadan. Nearly 14 million Jews fast during the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur), as well as on other special occasions. About 800 million religious Hindus fast on the Ekadashi day, on Janmashtami, and in the month of Shravan.

Gandhi, who led India’s nonviolent movement for freedom from Colonial England, initially tried fasting as means of self-restraint and realized its far greater benefits: “detoxification, heightened clarity of consciousness, and spiritual enhancement.” Gandhi concluded: “There is no prayer without fasting,” “The light of the world will illuminate within you when you fast and purify yourself” (www.fasting.com; cited in Bragg & Bragg, 1999).

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Fasting Methods

Aristotle, one of the greatest philosophers, said, “If there is one way better than another, it is the way of Nature”. Although abstaining from food to restore vitality is counterintuitive to modern people, fasting has been proved to be the most natural and original way to rest our body and revitalize its detoxification process to restore physical and mental health. Fasting is one of naturopathic healing methods that will, hopefully some time in the future, replace disease-suppressing therapies in modern scientific medical care. We can achieve a disease-free civilization only by following Mother Nature’s law.

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Lemonade Diet Method

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