

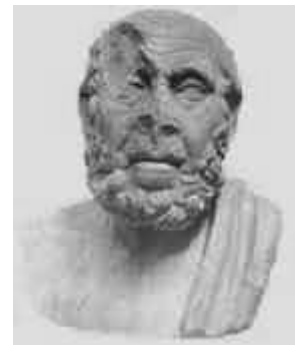
Why fasting?

"Humans live on one-quarter of what they eat; on the other three-quarters lives their doctor." - Egyptian pyramid inscription, 3800 B.C.

"Very few people know what real health is, because most are occupied with killing themselves slowly." - Albert Szent-Gyorgyi, Ph.D., Hungarian-born American biochemist; Nobel Prize in physiology and medical science

Before we look at how to fast, let's examine the question: "Why fasting?" Although hundreds of fasting centers and clinics have existed in most European countries throughout the 20th century, Americans are still very far behind the learning curve regarding scientific, therapeutic fasting, as well as in adopting natural and organic food diets.

Likewise, despite all 3 Fathers of Western Medicine having fasted and having prescribed fasting (Hippocrates, Galen and Paracelsus, who declared fasting "the greatest remedy, the physician within"), the fact remains that symptoms-oriented trained U.S. physicians are also equally in the dark.



In the U.S., many in the medical orthodoxy continue to take a negative view of fasting, particularly as a therapeutic tool. But when the medical profession shifts gears from treating illness to PREVENTING illness, fasting will be increasingly prescribed.

Harvard-trained M.D., Andrew Weil, in his 1995 bestselling book "Spontaneous Healing", clearly summarizes what Allopathic Medicine can and cannot do for you, on pages 225-226: "CAN: "Manage trauma better than any other system of medicine; diagnose and treat many medical and surgical emergencies; treat acute bacterial infections with modern antibiotics; treat some parasitic and fungal infections; prevent many infectious

diseases by immunization; diagnose complex medical problems; replace damaged hips and knees; get good results with cosmetic and reconstructive surgery, and it can diagnose and correct hormonal deficiencies.

Allopaths CANNOT: Treat viral infections; cure most chronic degenerative diseases; effectively manage most kinds of mental illness; cure most forms of allergy or autoimmune disease; effectively manage psychosomatic illnesses, or cure most forms of cancer."¹

Doctor Weil also holds this opinion: "Do not seek help from a conventional doctor for a condition that conventional medicine cannot treat, and do not rely on an alternative provider for a condition that conventional medicine can manage well."

Too often, scientific studies prove nothing. Frequently, the source of the money dictates the conclusions. Yet, these experiments are all we have to go by, and are crucially important when we are testing these potentially-dangerous drugs that may have various hazardous effects. Fasting and adopting a healing diet designed to help one's condition, on the other hand, are health-supporting. They will make a healthy person even healthier.

Fasting - an "operation without surgery"

"Fasting is, without any doubt, the most effective biological method of treatment... it is the 'operation without surgery'... it is a cure involving exudation, reattunement, redirection, loosening up and purified relaxation. While fasting, the patient improves her or his physical health and gains much. But he or she will have neglected the most important thing if the hunger for spiritual nourishment that manifests itself during fasting is not satisfied." said Otto Buchinger, Sr., M.D., Germany's great, self-described

¹ Allopaths and Allopathic Medicine treat disease with remedies producing effects different than the disorder being treated, for instance, in the use of drugs or surgery to treat symptoms. In our society, Allopathy is synonymous with "conventional" medicine.

"fasting therapist," who founded the most famous of several renowned, European Buchinger Kliniks in 1952.

Prolonged, scientific fasting has proven itself, over several thousand years, as humanity's oldest, fastest and most effective weight-loss, detoxification, healing and longevity-enhancing modality known to mankind - both curative, as well as preventive - and here are the reasons why:

Just as hibernating bears and migrating whales, as well as much smaller beings, including caterpillars, salmon, hedgehogs, snakes, salamanders, spiders, turtles, tadpoles and woodchucks, do live for many months each year without eating, your body is brilliantly designed to live on its own stored substances. Similarly, during skillful, therapeutic and prolonged juice-fasts (and every reputable fasting book today begins with a warning that no one should ever undertake a prolonged fast without professional supervision, initially), your body will brilliantly live on its own stored substance via "autolysis", or autodigestion. Marvelously, the body decomposes and burns all the cells and tissue which are aged, damaged, diseased, weakened or dead.

Autodigestion during fasting

During fasting, your body will "autolyze", or self-digest, its most inferior and impure materials and metabolic wastes, including: fat deposits, abscesses, dead and dying cells, bumps and protuberances, damaged tissue, calluses, furuncles (small skin abscesses, or boils), morbid accumulations, growths, and amazingly, various kinds of neoplasms (abnormal growths of tissue, or tumors). In "Fasting and eating for health", Joel Fuhrman, M.D., notes, p. 10: "The fast does not merely detoxify; it also breaks down superfluous tissue - fat, abnormal cells, atheromatous plaque², and tumors - and releases diseased tissues and their cellular products into the circulation for elimination. Toxic or unwanted materials circulate in our bloodstream and lymphatic tissues, and are deposited in and released from our fat stores and other tissues. An important element of fasting detoxification is mobilizing (i.e., releasing) the toxins from their storage areas."

New cell growth during fasting is stimulated and accelerated as the required proteins are re-synthesized from decomposed cells (during

² *Atheromatous* – on the inner wall of the arteries.

autolysis). Thus, your serum albumin reading - blood-protein level - remains constant and normal throughout your fast, as your body very smartly uses protein and other stored nutrients where needed. Again, Germany's late Otto Buchinger, M.D., after supervising over 100,000 juice-fasts, eventually concluded what is clearly stated in the book, "Fasting: the Buchinger Method", page 22: "The need for protein diminishes during the fast, until in the second week, it has been reduced from 100 grams to from 15-20 grams a day, and this amount is, in fact, quite sufficient while fasting."

Unfortunately, today's most Western diets are heavily loaded with artificial flavors and chemically-created coloring agents, toxic pesticides, herbicides and fungicides, and insecticides, and other toxic chemicals which overburden our bodies.



As this toxic overload accumulates decade after decade, augmented also by environmental pollution, drugs and medications, it eventually interferes with normal functioning and our body's elimination becomes impaired. During fasting, large amounts of these accumulated metabolic wastes and poisons are, during autolysis, very quickly eliminated through the greatly enhanced cleansing capability of all the organs of elimination - liver, kidneys, skin and lungs. Several common symptoms of detoxification seen during this process could be darker urine, the possibility of catarrhal elimination of excess mucus ("rhinorrhea" - a mucous discharge from the nose), continuous discharge through the colon, etc.

Fasting gives your digestive system a rest

For perhaps the first time in your entire life, fasting affords a physiological rest to the digestive, assimilative and protective organs of your body. Fresh fruit and vegetable juices require little digestion, and are quickly assimilated from the upper digestive tract. Therefore, most of the 10% of bodily energy normally involved in your mastication (i.e., chewing), assimilation, digestion, and elimination is freed up. This is another reason

you'll feel more - not less - energy throughout properly-done juice-fasting - unlike the physically debilitating weakness water-fasters experience.

Additionally, these many fruit and vegetable juices all supply excellent energy, minerals, vitamins, live enzymes, and other nutrients necessary to enhance health during the fast. By providing much of the body's daily caloric needs with easily-digested juices, the release of toxins from the fat cells is much more gentle and gradual.

Scientific fasting enhances longevity, as Doctor Fuhrman notes in "Fasting and eating for health", p. 27: "If we restrict the calories an animal can eat, by underfeeding it or periodically fasting it, we can significantly prolong its life. In fact, periodically fasting animals can double their natural life span.(1,2)

What about water-fasting?

In his 1999 instant classic, "Radical Healing: Integrating the World's Great Therapeutic Traditions to Create a New Transformative Medicine," Rudolph Ballentine, M.D., Founder and Director of the Center for Holistic Medicine in New York City, does not recommend "water-fasting," which he says "is more correctly termed starvation," adding the following words of warning: "The destruction of starvation, and the cleansing and repair that happen in a well-managed fast, are polar opposites. Unfortunately today, when the average person is overburdened with wastes and environmental toxins, and when reserves of essential nutrients are low because of the ubiquity of 'empty-calorie' foods, what is intended as a fast may well end up as starvation. Your best insurance against such a catastrophe is to do a juice-fast. Juices can eliminate much of the trauma of fasting."

Freshly-squeezed and extracted vegetable and fruit juices contain a wealth of vitamins and organically-complexed minerals. They will also supply the 400 calories or so that is your minimal fuel requirement. Without that minimum caloric intake, your body begins to break-down protein structures to get it. What's more, fresh juices have a cleansing effect of their own. During fasting, a balanced regime of juices should be made from a broad spectrum of fruits and vegetables.

Dr. Ballentine, who does not recommend juice-fasting for a duration of more than 3 days without expert supervision, is supported by the fact that none of the world's best fasting centers and clinics - the majority of which

have been based in Europe, historically - have done debilitating water-fasting over the past 75 years. Like the world-renowned, self-described "fasting therapist," Otto Buchinger, Sr., M.D., who supervised over 100,000 fasts, they've all done the wiser, more efficient juice-fasting.

Since fasting has never been taught in any of America's 127 medical schools, allopath doctors - schooled exclusively to deal only with symptoms, versus the causes which prolonged, juice-fasting more wisely addresses - hold a dim view of fasting. In fact, most allopath doctors appear never to have known, or seem to have forgotten, that all 3 Fathers of Western Medicine practiced and prescribed prolonged fasting - Hippocrates, Galen and Paracelsus, who declared fasting "the greatest remedy, the physician within."

By Marc Lacasse

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Fasting for Spiritual Nourishment

“But he or she will have neglected the most important thing if the hunger for spiritual nourishment that manifests itself during fasting is not satisfied.” ó Dr. Otto Buchinger, quoted above

“Then I set my face toward the Lord God to seek Him in prayer and supplication, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes.” ó Daniel 9:3

“And Jesus said to them, ‘Can the friends of the bridegroom fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them they cannot fast. But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast in those days.’” ó Mark 2:19-20 (referring to the anticipation of Christ the Bridegroom’s return in glory following His Death, Resurrection, and Ascension into heaven)

As great as the medical benefits of fasting are, the spiritual benefits are even greater. This fact has been recognized in virtually every prominent religious tradition from ancient times. All include fasting practices to some degree: Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism (China), Greek mystery religions, and Islam (which borrowed its practice from Judaism and Christianity). Despite the secularizing tendencies of Greco-Roman, and subsequent Western European, societies, fasting still remains primarily a *spiritual* discipline among the vast majority of people in the world, none more so than Orthodox Christians.

Christian fasting follows the example of Christ Jesus Himself who, after His baptism in the Jordan River, “fasted forty days and forty nights” (Matt. 4:2) prior to the start of His public ministry. Precursors for Christ’s fasting were the fasting of Moses on Mount Sinai, who was “with the Lord forty days and forty nights” (Ex. 34:28), the fasting journey of Elijah to Mount Horeb, who “went with the strength of [one meal] forty days and forty nights” (3 Kgm.[1 Kg.] 19:8), and the forty year passage of Israel through the wilderness to the Promised Land of Canaan (Deut. 2:7).

The way to the Promised Land was a test, “to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep [the Lord’s] commandments or not. So He dealt

harshly with you and weakened you with hunger, and fed you with manna,³ which your fathers did not know, that He might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but by every word proceeding from the mouth of God man shall live” (Deut. 8:2-3).

As with Moses, Elijah, and Christ Jesus, the desire for God overrides the natural desire for food. Abstaining from food altogether, or reducing one’s intake to very simple fare, the Christian purposely “put[s] on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make[s] no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts” (Rom. 13:14). “Armed with a zealous mind and constant compunction we shall dull the wantonness of the flesh (which is the more vehemently inflated by the heat of food) and its hurtful stings, and with an abundance of tears and with weeping of our heart we shall thus be able to extinguish the furnace of our body...This is our first contest, then; this is, as it were, our first trial in the Olympic Games (i.e., spiritual contest; cf. 1 Cor. 9:24-27) – the extinguishing of the belly’s desire to gormandize⁴ *out of a yearning for perfection*” (St. John Cassian, *The Institutes*, 5.14.2-3; italics mine).

The human person is a psychosomatic organism, composed of both body and soul. Fasting first involves the body and its appetites to which we easily enslave ourselves. “The truth is, as one will discover, that the belly is the cause of all human shipwreck. A fasting man prays austere, but the mind of someone intemperate is filled up with unclean imaginings...Begrudge the stomach and your heart will be humbled; please the stomach and your mind will turn proud...It is truly astounding how the incorporeal mind can be defiled and darkened by the body.



³ *Manna* was the daily bread provided by God each morning on the ground in the Israelite camp. The word *manna* is Hebrew, meaning “what is it?” because the people did not know how to describe it. Only enough *manna* for the day was allowed to be collected; none could be stored overnight except on Friday for the next Sabbath-day’s provision because the Israelites were not allowed the work of gathering food for themselves on the Sabbath (see Ex. 16).

⁴ *Gormandize* – to eat gluttonously or greedily.

Equally astonishing is the fact that the immaterial spirit can be purified and refined by clay” (St. John Klimacos, *The Ladder*, 14.18, 19, 22, 28).

Thus physical fasting, if it is truly spiritual and beneficial, is always linked with the purification of the soul and the re-direction of the entire person toward godly ends. “Sensual pleasure causes ungodliness as well as sin, but fasting and self-control result in the fear of God as well as virtue. Fasting must be accompanied by self-control. Why? Because eating our fill, even of humble foods, is a hindrance to the purifying mourning, godly sorrow, and contrition in our souls, which bring about unswerving repentance leading to salvation” (St. Gregory Palamas, *Homily 6*, 17).

The lesser leads to the greater. Fasting with the body leads to true hunger and desire of the soul. “For, if our mind’s strength has not been put to the test and if we have not been able to subject the frail and resistant flesh to our spirit, we shall not be in a position to undertake more serious struggles with the evil beings of the air (that is, the demons)” (St. John Cassian, *The Institutes*, 5.16.2). By controlling our natural body, which in sinful desires has become our enemy, we win the first victory and free ourselves for higher blessings to come. The first sin was the succumbing of Adam and Eve to desire to eat the sole fruit from which they were commanded to fast, thus excluding themselves from the Paradise of delights (Gen. 2:15-17; 3:23-24). By learning to fast, we free ourselves from disobedience to partake once again of Paradise.

“Prayer, fasting, vigil, and all other Christian activities, however good they may be in themselves, do not constitute the aim of our Christian life, although they serve as the indispensable means of reaching this end. The true aim of our Christian life consists in acquisition of the Holy Spirit of God. As for fasts, and vigils, and prayer, and almsgiving, and every good deed done for Christ’s sake, they are only means of acquiring the Holy Spirit of God. But mark, my son, only the good deed done for Christ’s sake brings us the fruits of the Holy Spirit” (St. Seraphim of Sarov to N. A. Motovilov, in *An Extraordinary Peace*, by Fr. Lazarus Moore [Port Townsend, WA: Anaphora Press, 2009], pg. 112).

Fasting – as with prayer, vigils, almsgiving, and every good work – is an indispensable tool for Christian perfection. Fasting is not an optional activity for the Christian, as Christ says, “When you fast...” (Matt. 6:16). Likewise the Church guided by the Holy Spirit according to Holy Tradition enjoins various *fasts* on its members, notably, Wednesdays and Fridays, and the season of Great Lent (40 days before Holy Week and Pascha). The Church has *canonical rules* for fasting. For instance, during Great Lent the general rule of *xerophagia* (lit., “dry-eating”) is prescribed, “signif[ying] that we may eat only vegetables cooked with water and salt, and also such things as fruit, nuts, bread, and honey” (from *The Lenten Triodion*, trans. by Mother Mary and Archimandrite Kallistos Ware [South Canaan, PA: St. Tikhon’s Seminary Press, 1994], pg. 35). *Xerophagia* means abstention from animal flesh, dairy products, oil, and alcoholic drinks. However in practice, this rule is somewhat relaxed according to local and personal needs.

“Dry-eating” regarding luxurious, passion-exciting foods extends to controlling the intake of lascivious entertainments. “The honor of fasting consists not in abstention from food, but in withdrawing from sinful practices; since he who limits his fasting only to an abstinence from meats is one who



especially disparages it...Do you fast? Give me proof of it by your works...For let not the mouth only fast, but also the eye, and the ear, and the feet, and the hands, and all the members of our bodies. Let the hands fast by being pure from stealing and greed. Let the feet fast by ceasing from running to the unlawful spectacles.⁵ Let the eyes fast being taught never to fix themselves rudely upon handsome faces, or to busy themselves with strange beauties...The fasting of the ear consists in refusing to receive evil

⁵ Today, “unlawful spectacles” includes sporting events, movies, musical concerts, television shows, and computer-accessed events, etc. composed of and promoting sexual immorality, violence, and godlessness.

speakings and calumnies” (St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 3 On the Statutes*, 11). True fasting transforms both body *and* soul in purity.

Whatever our practice, we must fast and pray *for Christ’s sake in pursuit of the gifts of the Holy Spirit*. We are to “hunger and thirst for righteousness” and thus “be filled” (Matt. 5:6). “Whoever drinks of the water [Jesus] shall give him will never thirst” (John 4:14); Christ is speaking of the Holy Spirit. “Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh...the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against these there is no law. And those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit” (Gal. 5:16, 22-25).

Why fasting? “Fasting is the champion of every virtue, the *beginning of the struggle*, the crown of the abstinent, the beauty of virginity and holiness, the resplendence of chastity, the *commencement of the path of Christianity*, the mother of prayer, the well-spring of sobriety and prudence, the teacher of stillness, and the *precursor of all good works*. Just as the enjoyment of light is coupled with healthy eyes, so desire for prayer accompanies fasting that is practiced with discernment” (St. Isaac the Syrian, *Homily 37*; italics mine).

So let us commence our life in Christ with fasting.

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