

5:2 Fasting Diet Quick Start Guide

Why is the 5:2 Diet so Popular?

The list of celebrities who have tried the 5:2 Fast Diet seems to grow daily: Alex Salmond, Phillip Schofield, Benedict Cumberbatch, Jennifer Lopez, Beyonce, Christy Turlington, Liv Tyler, Miranda Kerr, Jennifer Aniston, and Ben Affleck are all said to have tried it. But why is it so popular, and does it work?

The concept of intermittent fasting diets such as the 5:2 diet involves getting your body into 'repair mode' rather than 'starvation mode', as is the case with regular diets. If you eat less for a longer period of time, your body will tend to store fat instead of burning it. This means that fasting intermittently is a more

effective way of getting rid of excess fat. It is also healthier than people may think: studies have shown that the fasting diet can help people live longer, keeping cholesterol levels low and even prevent dementia or other mental illnesses such as Parkinson's or Alzheimer's.

RULES OF THE 5:2 DIET

2 Fasting Days

- Count your calories: women can only have 500 calories on a fast day, men get 600.
- Fast two consecutive days or split them up to allow you time to recover, it doesn't really matter how you take your fast days
- Stick to fruits, veggies and proteins
- Eat heaps of veggies
- Cut out all sugars and carbs
- Drink plenty of water
- Try to keep busy and get some moral support to help you get through the day



5 Normal Days

- Eat what you want, when you want, but try to make healthier choices
- Fill up on protein to prevent yourself from overeating
- Choose high-fiber low-GI carbs over refined carbs
- Plan any social gatherings on your normal days
- Get some exercise to make your diet more effective and improve your health



TIP:

Try not to obsess over food, whether you are having a fasting day or not. Focussing on your meals all the time will make you overeat. Rather, compile a menu for the week and go do your shopping to make things easier. Plan your meals and snacks for the fast days, as preparing veggies and salads may be a bit time consuming. Check out our [recipes](#) section for more low calorie sample meals.

SAMPLE FAST DAY EATING PLAN

BREAKFAST:

Spinach Omelette = 94 calories

- 1 medium egg
- 60g fresh spinach
- Fresh herbs to taste



LUNCH: *Salad = 230 calories*

- 40g lettuce or mixed salad leaves
- 2 spring onions
- ½ a medium carrot
- 4 cherry tomatoes
- 8 slices cucumber
- 38g feta cheese
- 50g pickled baby beets
- 1 tbsp balsamic vinegar



DINNER: *Chicken and Vegetable Stir Fry = 180 calories*

- Chicken – ½ breast, without skin or bones
- A handful of snow peas, broccoli, carrot and peppers
- A dash of oyster sauce



SNACKS: *If you prefer a few snacks throughout the day, drop the feta (100 calories) from lunch and add a couple of these snacks at about 50 calories each:*

- ¾ cup of grapes
- Rice cake with avocado
- Celery and carrot sticks with hummus

TIP:

You can also do smaller meals with more snacks in between. Drink plenty of water to fill you up and chew on celery sticks, carrots or cucumber during the day. If you get sweet cravings, eat a piece of fruit or have some low-fat yoghurt sweetened with stevia.

Exercise:

What is interesting about fasting is that it creates a similar hormonal response as intensive exercising. When you fast, your growth hormone levels will rise, while insulin levels tend to drop, and you will burn fat. This means that you can burn some extra fat on non-fast days by simply exercising.

- Try to get at least two hours of moderate exercise or one hour of vigorous exercise per week. Go for a walk every day, especially on fasting days when you need to get your mind off food.



Moderate exercise : is working out while increasing your heart rate, but you will still be able to have a conversation. Examples are walking, leisurely cycling or swimming.



Vigorous exercise : you will be too breathless to talk comfortably. Examples include walking at 8 km/h, jogging or high-impact aerobics.

- Studies show that exercise while fasting will make you burn fat faster, so exercise on both fast and normal days
- If exercising on fasting days, be careful not to overdo it, and keep hydrated
- Park your car further away from where you need to be, or take the stairs instead of the elevator – there are plenty of ways to burn some extra calories without having to schedule it into your day.

Experts say:



Nutritionists are often skeptical about diets where you are allowed to eat whatever you want on certain days. Experts say to always follow a balanced diet which includes whole grains, good protein, nuts, plenty of veggies and fruit. The great thing about the 5:2 diet is that you can enjoy an occasional treat, but try not to make it a habit.