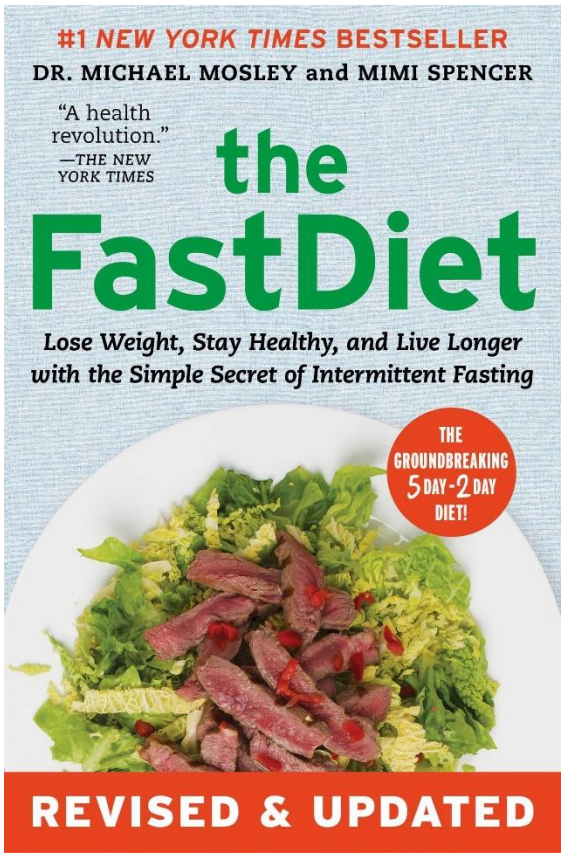
The Fast Diet — Summary



Written Summary

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Reap the scientifically proven benefits of Intermittent fasting

The evolutionary advantage of fasting

For millennia, our ancestors had to survive as hunters and gatherers. Which means, they had no regular meal schedule. Our ancestors simply ate whenever they had the opportunity and then had to survive days sometimes weeks without food. Thus, our bodies evolved to adapt to intermittent fasting.

The health benefits of intermittent fasting

What follows is an excerpt from a paper published in the scientific Journal Cell Metabolism.

Fasting has been practiced for millennia, but, only recently, studies have shed light on its role in adaptive cellular responses that reduce oxidative damage and inflammation, optimize energy metabolism, and bolster cellular protection. In lower eukaryotes, chronic fasting extends longevity, in part, by reprogramming metabolic and stress resistance pathways. In rodents, intermittent or periodic fasting protects against diabetes, cancers, heart disease, and neurodegeneration, while in humans it helps reduce obesity, hypertension, asthma, and rheumatoid arthritis. Thus, fasting has the potential to delay aging and help prevent and treat diseases while minimizing the side effects caused by chronic dietary interventions.

But if fasting is so healthy, then where does the advice come from that eating several smaller meals during the day is healthier? In part that misconception has ben promoted by snack manufacturers and faddish diet books. Their reasoning is that if we eat lots of small meals we are less likely to get hungry enough to eat a high-fat junk meal.

This argument seems sound, and there are some studies which show that regular small meals show benefits, whenever we don't end up eating more. But in practice, that is what happens.

Recent research has shown that the amount of time we spend not eating has dropped dramatically. If the common advice mentioned before was true, there should've been a reduction in consumed calories with the increased frequency of meals. But exactly the opposite happened. The same study found that compared to 30 years ago, we not only eat 180 more calories in snacks, but we also eat 120 more calories per day on regular meals.
The Institute for Clinical and Experimental Medicine in Prague performed a study with two groups of diabetics. Both groups consumed 1.700 calories per day, but one group had six meals per day while the other group's meals were divided in just two per day. Although the amount of calories were the same, for

both groups, the two-meal-group lost an average of 1.4 kg and 1.5 inches more from their waists than the six-meal “snacker group”.

Hormesis—What doesn’t kill us makes us stronger

‘When a little poison is good for you’ was an article written in the New Scientist magazine by Professor Mark Mattson of the National Institute on Aging in Baltimore and Edward Calabrese.
The article explains the **theory of hormesis**. Hormesis is the idea that a living being is exposed to stress or a toxin, it can toughen up. It is now a well-accepted explanation at how cells operate in biology.
Exercise is one example, when you pump iron, what you are doing on a cellular level is damaging your muscles, causing small tears. Your body responds by repairing the damage and in the process, growing the muscles stronger.

Thinking or having to make decisions can also be stressful, yet there is good evidence that challenging yourself intellectually is good for your brain, and the reason it is good is that it produces myelin, a change in the brain aimed at adapting to the stress, similar to a change of the muscles after exercise. Check the book The Talent Code for more details on Myelin and the Brain.

So what has hormesis to do with fasting? While prolonged starvation is clearly bad for health, there is no evidence that short periods of intermittent fasting are bad. Indeed, the opposite is true.

Fasting and longevity

Scientific evidence which shows that intermittently fasting aids longevity is growing.

An article in the scientific journal Nature stated that while the fundamental mechanisms behind why fasting works are not yet clear, research shows definite benefits.
One potential mechanism is the IGF-1 hormone or insulin-like growth factor 1. This hormone is reduced in your body while fasting which may lead to a decreased likelihood of developing cancer as well as increasing longevity.

When you fast or starve, your body quits the normal grow-mode and enters the repair-mode where levels of IGF-1 drop off. Experiments with mice which were engineered not to produce IGF-1 showed that they lived almost twice as long as mice with IGF-1. They also didn’t develop diabetes or cancer.

What about humans? One study with Ecuadorians with the Laron syndrome, a genetic mutation which results in low levels of IGF-1, showed that they never

developed diabetes or cancer. Dr. Valter Longo who performed the studies concluded that we may need IGF-1 when we are young, but elevated levels later in life may lead to accelerated aging and even illnesses such as cancer.

Fasting can prevent brain diseases and produce happiness

One study showed that when mice vulnerable to Alzheimer were put on an intermittent fasting diet, signs of Alzheimer were delayed for 20 months. Equivalently to an 80-year-old person.

The mice also showed an increase in the protein known as a brain-derived neurotrophic factor, which stimulates stem cells to grow into new nerve cells in the hippocampus, an area of the brain responsible for learning and memory. Interestingly enough, the same protein showed antidepressant effects when injected into the brain of rats.

If these results transfer to humans, the results would not only mean avoiding potential illnesses but more happiness.

Fasting can help with inflammatory diseases

Asthma sufferers have reported alleviation of symptoms as a result of fasting. One woman, for example, decided to fast to lose weight. Not only did she lose 14 pounds but her breathing also improved.

One study found that individuals under a fasting diet for eight weeks showed improvement in their asthma symptoms after just two weeks.

Although not yet scientifically proven, benefits of fasting are also reported for eczema sufferers also. An inflammatory condition from which 10% of the US population suffers.

Fasting can help prevent diabetes

In 2014 4.9 million people died from diabetes. Intermittent fasting can help prevent diabetes by substantially increasing the insulin sensitivity of our bodies.

Insulin is the hormone responsible for converting blood glucose to glycogen and store it as energy in our liver and muscles.

When a person suffers from diabetes, his or her body stops responding to insulin as it should.

Studies have shown that two weeks of fasting for 20 hours every other day resulted in a higher insulin sensitivity in men. This means that the same amount of insulin worked much more efficiently in their bodies than it did before.

When we fast, our body uses stored fat cells as energy. These cells are which disturb insulin from working properly, thus fasting leads to fewer fat cells and increased insulin efficiency.