

PURIST

AN ADVENTURE IN WELLNESS

ELLE
MACPHERSON

THE BODY,
THE BRAINS,
THE BEAUTY
OF LIVING
YOUR BEST LIFE

KATY PERRY
ON TRANSCENDENTAL
MEDITATION

**WELLNESS
WARRIORS**

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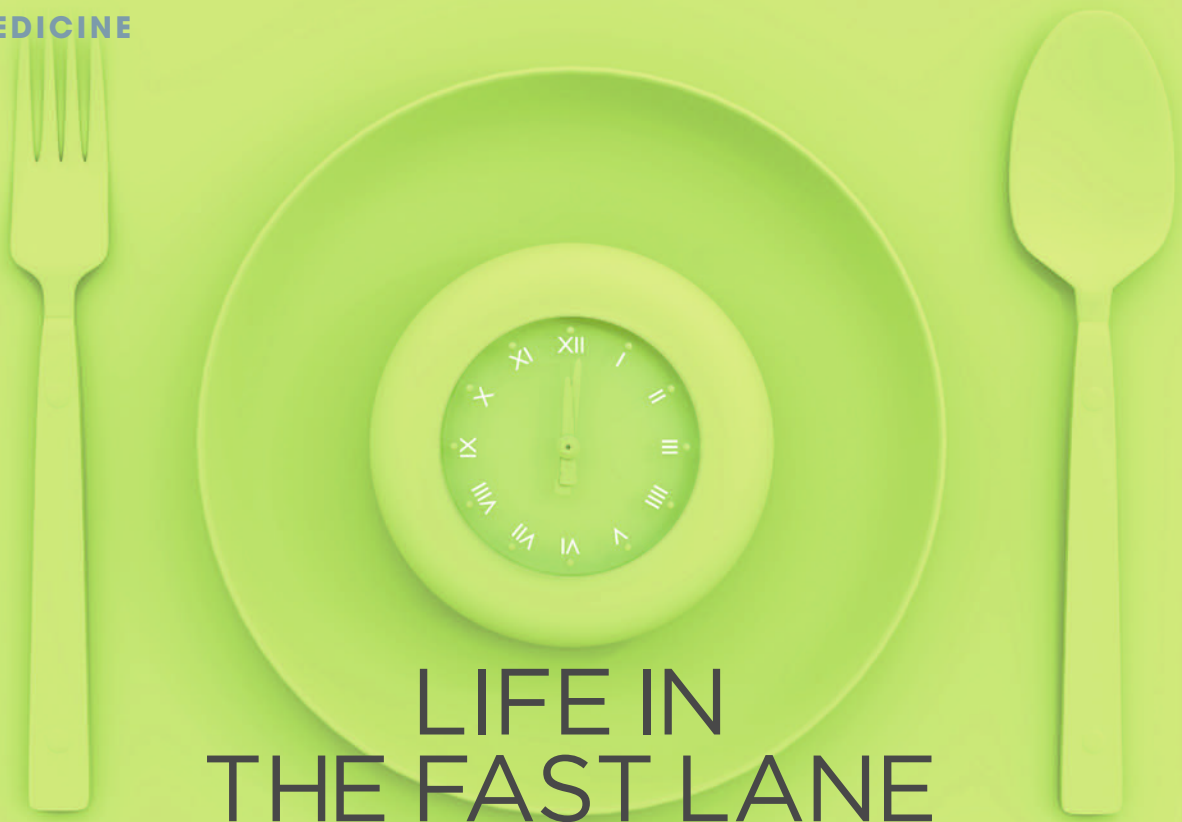
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JULY IN
THE HAMPTONS





LIFE IN THE FAST LANE

Intermittent fasting is said to speed weight loss and slow the signs of aging.

Will the Hunger Games diet work for you? BY A.J. HANLEY

It wasn't long ago that skipping meals was a big, fat no-no for dieters. But in recent years, going without food for 12, 16 or even 24 hours has become a popular way to shed excess pounds. Intermittent fasting plans like the 16:8 diet (fast for 16 hours a day) and the 5:2 diet (feast for 5 days, fast for 2) count Silicon Valley techies among their fans, as well as celebs like Hugh Jackman and Beyoncé.

While fasting is having a moment, it's no fad, according to Valter Longo, PhD, director of the Longevity Institute at the University of Southern California: "People have been fasting for religious reasons for thousands of years, but now they're doing it for their health," he says. A growing body of research suggests that intermittent fasting can lower body fat; reduce risk factors for diabetes, cardiovascular disease and cancer; and improve markers for aging. "It gives cells a break to rest and rebuild themselves as the body shifts from storing fat to burning it," Longo explains. In turn, the theory goes, they can become stronger and more resistant to various diseases.

If even the thought of fasting makes you hangry, Longo would have to agree. After spending decades studying the effects of extreme calorie restriction on bacteria, yeast cells, lab mice and humans, he deemed fasting too difficult for people to adhere to—and dangerous outside of a clinical setting. Aside from the psychic toll of going hungry for long periods, pushing your body to the limit can raise the risk for gallstones and other problems.

So Longo came up with a new plan that mimics fasting,

but isn't as hard-core or difficult to stick to. The concept, which he outlines in his new book, *The Longevity Diet* (Avery/Penguin Books), is that by eating certain combinations of nutrient-dense foods, you trick the body into thinking it's fasting. "A fasting-mimicking diet (FMD) triggers the same responses," he says. "It lowers levels of the hormone IGF-1 and glucose, which are linked to cancer and diabetes, and it increases ketone bodies, molecules used as energy during times of starvation."

For healthy adults, FMD cycles are meant to be done only three or four times a year by healthy people (and up to 12 times a year if you're obese), for just five days at a time. This allows you to avoid the misery of long starvation diets while reaping their waist-trimming benefits. Longo's plan is rich in plant-based foods and healthy fats, and low in protein and sugars. On day one, you'll take in 1,100 calories; after that, the tally drops to 800. A typical day might include tea and a handful of nuts for breakfast, olives as a snack and vegetable soup for both lunch and dinner. The rest of the year, maintain your weight by following Longo's simple, sensible pescatarian plan, eating just two meals a day (and an optional snack) within a 12-hour span.

If this dieting equivalent of cramming for an exam appeals to you and you've been given the green light from your doctor, give it a try (but pull back on social commitments first). Not only will you drop pounds, but it will allow you to get back in touch with the body's hunger signals, a key for long-term weight maintenance. 🍷