

# Fasting Protocol Decision Tree

Choose the right fasting protocol for your goals, health status, and lifestyle

## Choosing the Right Fasting Protocol

Not all fasting protocols are equal, and not all are appropriate for everyone. Use this decision framework to find the approach that matches your goals, lifestyle, and health status.

### STEP 1: ARE YOU A CANDIDATE FOR FASTING?

Do NOT fast if you:

- Are pregnant or breastfeeding
- Have a history of eating disorders
- Are underweight (BMI < 18.5)
- Are under 18
- Have type 1 diabetes or uncontrolled type 2 diabetes
- Are taking medications that require food (consult your doctor)
- Are over 65 with sarcopenia risk (prioritize protein over fasting)

### STEP 2: CHOOSE YOUR PROTOCOL

PROTOCOL	WHAT IT DOES	WHO IT IS FOR	EVIDENCE
<b>Time-Restricted Eating (10-12 hr window)</b>	Easiest to maintain; metabolic benefits without extreme restriction	Best for: Most people, beginners, women in perimenopause	Strong
<b>16:8 Fasting</b>	Moderate restriction; may improve insulin sensitivity	Best for: Metabolically healthy adults with no muscle loss concerns	Moderate
<b>5:2 (2 days at 500-600 cal)</b>	Periodic caloric restriction; flexible scheduling	Best for: People who prefer normal eating most days	Moderate
<b>24-Hour Fast (1-2x/month)</b>	Stronger autophagy activation; challenging	Best for: Experienced fasters with good metabolic health	Emerging
<b>Extended Fast (36-72 hr)</b>	Maximum autophagy; significant physiological stress	Best for: Under medical supervision only	Limited in humans

### STEP 3: OPTIMIZE YOUR FASTING WINDOW

- **Earlier is better:** Eating earlier in the day (e.g., 7am-5pm) aligns with circadian rhythm and shows better metabolic outcomes than late eating windows
- **Protein first:** Break your fast with protein-rich food to maximize muscle protein synthesis

- **Stay hydrated:** Water, black coffee, and plain tea are fine during fasting windows
- **Exercise timing:** Resistance training is better performed in the fed state; Zone 2 is fine fasted

#### STEP 4: MONITOR AND ADJUST

- Track fasting insulin and HbA1c every 6 months to verify metabolic benefit
- Monitor body composition — if losing muscle mass, reduce fasting or increase protein
- Track energy, mood, and sleep quality — fasting should improve these over time
- If experiencing excessive hunger, irritability, or insomnia — shorten the fasting window

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