

# Fasting Made Easy

## *An Ancient Practice Gets A Modern Look*

by  
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It is well known that fasting has been used for thousands of years in ancient religious rituals, but it was also recognized for its healing abilities. Fasting has been used to treat minor illnesses, ranging from colds and flues, to major ones, like congestive heart disease and diabetes. It has also been used for safe weight loss. Yet today fasting is hardly practiced at all. That will soon be changing.

An increasing number of doctors and researchers are again recognizing the health benefits of fasting. Recent scientific studies at UC Berkeley and the National Institute of Aging, have demonstrated that fasting may reduce one's chances of developing diabetes, Alzheimer's disease, and cancer. Also, there is very good evidence that regulated fasting contributes to longer life.

Fasting works by giving the digestive and eliminative organs of the body a rest. This rest allows the body to focus its energy on internal cleansing. The body can then remove accumulated toxic substances and break down damaged, diseased and unneeded cells, like abscesses, excess fat deposits and congestive wastes.

The problem with fasting, an issue that was noted in the UC Berkeley study, is that fasting can cause people to feel hungry and irritable. Usually fasting is associated with deprivation. Today that too is changing. There are many fasting diets available, including a new fasting diet that uses the juice of lemons and the tree syrup of maple and palm trees. The Neera Super Cleanse (Neera is the Ayurvedic name for palm syrup) has long been popular in Europe and is now gaining momentum in America and is helping to change the way people think about fasting.

### **History and Evolution of Fasting**



The practice of fasting for health goes back to the ancient Greeks. Galen, Paracelsus and Hippocrates, recognized as the fathers of Western Medicine, prescribed fasting for all serious ailments. Plato, Socrates, and Aristotle also practiced fasting and Pythagoras required it of his students before they received his highest teachings.

Over the centuries a surprisingly diverse group of cultures have practiced fasting. The Zulus have a saying: "The continually stuffed body cannot see secret things." Many Native American tribes practice fasting for spiritual and physical purification and in India fasting has been an important tradition for thousands of years. But, as science and modern medicine developed in Europe and North America, the

use of fasting declined. There have been some notable exceptions, however, in the United States, Benjamin Franklin, one of the most famous founding fathers, practiced fasting. In Franklin's *Poor Richard's Almanac*, he cautioned that overeating is far worse for the body than under eating. "Eat few suppers and you'll need few medicines... To lengthen thy life, lessen thy meals."



Mark Twain also fasted. He once stated: "A little starvation can really do more for the average sick man than can the best medicines and the best doctors. I do not mean a restricted diet; I mean total abstention from food for one or two days. I speak from experience; starvation has been my cold and fever doctor for fifteen years, and has accomplished a cure in all instances."

In modern times our understanding of fasting has increased. According to Janine Leach, doctor of naturopathic and osteopathic medicine, "Fasting rests the digestive tract, permits detoxification, and stimulates the immune system to speed recovery. Naturopaths use fasting both for treating acute infections, and also for chronic conditions where congestion is a feature, to stimulate elimination, such as asthma, sinusitis, cholecystitis, skin conditions, and colitis."

Recent scientific studies have also started to support the claims of fasting advocates. A UC Berkeley study, released in March 2005, tested the effects of fasting on mice. The study showed that mice placed on a fasting diet where they were fed intermittently or three days a week, experienced a significant reduction in cell proliferation in several tissues considered an indicator for cancer risk. "Cell proliferation is really the key to the modern epidemic of cancer", said Professor Marc Hellerstein, the principal investigator of the study. The mice of the study, while being restricted to how often they could eat, were only fed 5 percent fewer calories than the mice that were allowed to eat freely. The results seem to indicate that the rest period when the animals weren't eating was a key to the limiting of cancerous cell proliferation. It was speculated that this is nature's built in defense mechanism against cancer. It was also noted in the UC Berkeley study that in the wild, animals regularly go through cycles of too much and too little food. Again, according to Professor Hellerstein, "It may be normal to have periods where we are not eating. But in domestic life, there generally is a continuous access to food."



Another study with mice suggests that fasting can help fend off diabetes. Diabetes has long been one of the great risks associated with being overweight. In a 2005 study conducted by the National Institute of Aging, mice that fasted every other day, but were allowed to eat an unlimited amount on intervening days, had lower blood glucose and insulin levels than either of the two control

groups, one of which was allowed to feed freely and the other which was placed on a restricted diet of 30% less calories than the fasting group and free eating group. The NIA findings suggest that the fasting mice were less likely to develop diabetes. In the same study fasting mice were found to be more resistant to nerve cell injury caused by neurotoxins similar to the conditions in humans that causes Alzheimer's disease. Other studies by some of the same researchers also found that meal-skipping mice were more resistant to stroke, Parkinson's disease and Huntington's disease.

Even more intriguing, the NIA cited other studies where fasting was demonstrated to lengthen lifespan. In these studies mice that fasted lived up to 50 percent longer. It has also been found that periodic fasting can extend the maximum lifespan of a variety of organisms, including rats, flies, worms and yeast. The results can be dramatic, with a 30 to 70 percent increase in lifespan. It is believed by some researchers that the stress placed on the body by fasting actually helps cells to regenerate and repair themselves more efficiently, which results in lengthening lifespan.

While many scientific studies on fasting have been done with mice, few have been tried with people. Researchers at the Pennington Biomedical Research Center in Louisiana tried a fasting study with 16 non-obese adults but found that people reported feeling hungry and irritable on their fasting days. The authors of the study suggested that adding 20 percent of the day's caloric needs might take the edge off enough to make fasting more palatable.

### **The Neera Super Cleanse**



Pure water fasts are difficult for humans. The physiological and physical shock of ingesting only water has caused most fasting advocates to recommend juice or syrup fasts over pure water fasts. One of the modern pioneers of fasting and alternative health was the naturopath Stanley Burroughs. In the 1950's he invented a diet called the Lemonade Diet. He incorporated the healing benefits of water fasting with several ingredients to make fasting easier and more effective. The added ingredients of his fast were simple: lemon juice, maple syrup and cayenne pepper.

Lemon juice has been used for thousands of years for its medicinal value. Lemons are one of the best sources of vitamin C, which is one of the most important antioxidants found in nature. Lemons also contain flavonoids, which are compounds that have antioxidant and anti-cancer properties. Lemon juice is a tremendous natural metabolizer, breaking down build up of mucus and fat in the body. Also, lemon juice is one of the best alkalizing foods for the body.



To his fast Stanley Burroughs also added maple syrup. Maple syrup is easily digestible and is higher in natural plant sugars than any fruit juice. This gives the person energy to go about their daily business and not feel hungry or lethargic, which is a classic symptom of water fasts. Yet because maple syrup is so easily digested, the whole digestive and eliminative system of the body still gets to rest and refocus its energy on the cleansing and detoxification of the body.

In the early 1980's Burroughs teamed with a group of Swiss health practitioners to spread his diet around Europe. The group consisted of a naturopath, a homeopath, an Ayurvedic and orthodox western doctor. The team spread the diet around Europe and worked to improve upon it.

Later the European team led by KA Beyer of Switzerland, experimented with other tree syrups and found that certain palm trees in Sri Lanka and India produced a syrup that is abundantly rich in important minerals and still high in energy content. In India this syrup is called Neera and it has been used as a sweetener and a traditional Ayurvedic medicine for thousands of years. The team tried many combinations of Neera with maple syrup and produced the optimum blend of the two syrups for fasting. According to Dr. Leach "the ratios of calcium to magnesium and sodium to potassium are almost ideal for the human body's needs." The new mixed tree syrup was named Madal Bal Syrup after the name of their company in Europe.

Madal Bal Syrup contains mostly palm syrups from the Arenga, Kita, Nipah and Palmyra palm trees. The palm syrup is extracted mostly by small independent farmers using techniques monitored by Swiss aid workers. The Madal Bal Syrup also contains some pure maple syrup from Canada. Grade-C maple is used which is the darkest and most mineral rich grade of maple syrup. This combination of syrups creates a sweet tasting syrup similar to maple, but with a richer taste.



Hundreds of people who tried the diet with the new syrup reported that they felt better during the diet than when they did it with maple syrup alone. They had more energy, clarity and better results. The new book written by KA Beyer *The Lemon Diet* quickly spread through Europe, becoming a best seller in some countries and is now in its 28<sup>th</sup> edition. Over 3 million cans of Madal Bal Syrup have been sold worldwide.

After many years in Europe the Madal Bal Tree Syrup is now being sold in America as the Neera Super Cleanse.

## The Program

The Neera Super Cleanse works similarly to the Stanley Burroughs Master Cleanser. During the diet you replace all solid food with the Neera Drink, the mixture of Madal Bal Syrup, lemon juice, cayenne pepper and water. Most people mix a large batch in the morning and take it with them all day. The basic idea is to drink whenever you start to feel hungry. Most people drink 6 to 10 glasses a day. The syrup gives enough energy to keep you going and fills your stomach. The lemon juice and cayenne pepper invigorate the body's cleansing process. By not eating any solid food, the whole digestive track is given a chance to rest. The energy that the body normally uses on digestion instead is focused on eliminating the body's toxins and on cell rejuvenation. It has been shown in studies that during a fast the cleansing organs of the body, the liver, kidneys, colon and skin become more active.

Originally Stanley Burroughs recommended doing the Lemonade Diet for at least 10 days. Some people went on the fast for longer, up to 40 days, but today many people try the diet for 5 to 7 days, especially if it is their first time. Five days is long enough to give the body's digestive system a rest while going longer lets the cleanse get deeper and deeper into the body.

Proper elimination is an important part of the Neera Super Cleanse. During a fast most people don't experience a bowel movement, so a mild herbal laxative tea is recommended or other natural laxative. The Neera Super Cleanse kit includes 14 tea bags of a Senna based herbal laxative tea, enough to last at least a week. Another laxative option, one that gives the colon a safe and terrific natural flush, is to drink salt water. Mixing 2 teaspoons of sea salt to a quart of water creates a salt-water drink that is roughly the same salinity as the ocean and our own blood. The body can't absorb the salt-water so it passes through. Although it obviously isn't the greatest tasting drink, it is a very effective colonic laxative.

The most difficult part about the Neera Super Cleanse is starting. According to Charlie Rebich, president of the Neera Super Cleanse "On the first day it is important to drink lots of the Neera Drink. Don't let yourself get hungry. Most people cruise right through the week, but if there is going to be a tough period it usually happens within the first couple of days. The body goes through an adjustment while the stomach shrinks in size and any stored toxins are stirred up before they are released. A lot of people like to start the diet on a weekend when they won't have to be too active. By the third day most people are feeling perfectly normal and can go about all of their usual activities."



"By the fourth and fifth days, most people report a feeling of clarity and well being that is unprecedented. You'll most likely notice that you have more energy and

that you have extra time to get things done. There's a great freedom that comes from not having to stop for food. You just mix your batch in the morning and you're set for the whole day."

### **Breaking The Fast**

After resting the digestive system for several days, it is important to reintroduce solid foods gradually. The longer you are on the fast the more gradually you have to come out of it. Doing the fast for a week usually means drinking only fruit juices the first day after the fast, with maybe a little light vegetable soup (no chunky soup) in the evening. On the second day, start with fruit juices, then some vegetable soup and, by evening, try some salad or steamed vegetables. By the third day you can eat solid healthy food again. Coming back to solid food too quickly will result in an upset stomach, so listen to your body and don't rush back too soon.

### **French Study**

A study about the effects of the diet was done in France. Dr. Tourasse reported on a case series of 122 patients. Of these, 96 sought weight reduction, and 49 had a wide variety of other disease conditions, from ulcerative colitis to depression. In the first group, he noted an average weight loss of 6-13 pounds following the fast. Moreover, unexpected improvements were found in psyche, joints, skin conditions, allergies and gynecological function. Laboratory tests showed reductions in cholesterol and triglycerides in the majority of cases.

### **The Neera Super Cleanse: A Fasting Diet For Today**

Perhaps the Neera Super Cleanse is best summarized by David Stouder, the owner of Apple Health Foods in Redwood City, California, and host of a health advocate show on KEST radio: "When you do the Neera Super Cleanse you get control over food. I have done other fasts where I felt weak, but with this I felt good, I had a lot of stamina and best of all, for me, I lost 9 pounds in 5 days. I have recommended this to old people, young people, men and women and I tell you if you want to detoxify on a cellular level, this is the way to do it."

Like so many things in life we come full circle. Perhaps the ancient healers had it right as modern science is beginning to discover. "Fasting is the greatest remedy-the physician within." – Paracelsus.

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