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RELATION BETWEEN FASTING AND HEALTH

Ruhee Bano

Department of English, University of Kashmir, J & K, India

In the present situation most of the people are facing some kind of health problems i.e. overweight, obesity, blood pressure etc. these types of problems also affect the sports performance. Fasting plays a crucial role to defeat all these minor problems. Almost more than 95% of the human beings observe overnight fast on a daily basis, and the human body copes well with short duration fasting. Fasting does not necessarily mean starving yourself by avoiding complete food for long durations. Most of them relate fasting to doing wonders for their human body in terms of health and growth as stated by health experts. Even one pound of extra fat is sufficient to provide full day calories. Thus fasting helps the body to maintain its calorie requirement and prevents it from exceeding the limit.

KEYWORDS: Health, Fasting, Overweight, Obesity

INTRODUCTION

“In the fasting state, the body scours for dead cells, damaged tissues, fatty deposits, tumours and abscesses”

Given the choice of fasting and feasting, majority of us would choose the latter with open arms, for who don't like eating are gorging up on delicacies. Through fasting, our body gets rest and recovers from the energy-consuming task of metabolic activity, there by focusing more on cleansing the body to toxics. However, before going on a fast, one thing should be kept in mind. Completing fasting can be very harmful for the body, as the body requires nutrients and minerals. During a fast, you can also have a bowl of soup or salad once a day. The trick is not to get malnourished by supplying the body with necessary nutrients. Keep in mind that fasting is to ensure a healthy body. Fasting forms a major tradition of most religious practised across the globe, the most significant of them being Islam, Hinduism, Christianity, and Judaism. While every religion observes fast based on their respective rituals and practices. The fundamental idea behind it remains the same.

HINDUISM

Hinduism is one of the world's oldest religions, and has over 900 million adherents worldwide.

Hinduism is not a single doctrine, and there is no single founder or teacher. It originated around the Indus valley near the River Indus in today's Pakistan. It is over 3,000 years old and about 80% of the Indian population regard themselves as Hindu.,

Fasting is an integral part of Hinduism and is seen as a means of purifying the body and the soul, encouraging self- discipline, and gaining emotional balance. It is not considered obligatory for a Hindu patient to fast during hospitalisation; however, some patients may wish to fast while in hospital. There is no specified way to fast, but individuals may choose to abstain completely from all food and drink or only abstain from certain foods.

There are Hindu festivals in almost every month. They are based on the lunar calendar and hence the dates vary from year to year. Some festivals are based on the change of seasons and others celebrate and glorify the great incarnations or prayer campaigns to invoke and realise the divine within.

In Hinduism so many fasting occasion are there but most popular are Krishna-Janamashtmi,(01 time in a year) Shivaratri, (01 time in a year) Karvachouth, (01 time in a Year) Akadashi, (24 times in a year) Purnima, (12 time in a year)

Gopal Ashtami, (01 time in a year) Navaratri etc. In Hinduism more than 100 fasting day are there throughout the year. But most popular is Navaratri.

ISLAM

Islam originated some 1400 years ago and was established by the prophet Mohammad (Peace be upon him-pbuh). The word Islam means both 'peace' and 'submission'. It is the second largest religion in the world with over 1 billion followers, and over 1.6 million in the fasting is another unique, moral and spiritual characteristic of Islam. Literally defined, Fasting means to abstain “completely” from food, drinks, intimate intercourse and smoking, before the break of dawn till sunset, during the entire month of Ramadhan

It has already been indicated that the period of obligatory fasting is the month of Ramadan. The daily period of observance starts before the break of the dawn and ends immediately after sunset. Normally there are accurate calendars to tool the exact time, but in the absence of such facilities one should consult one's watch and the sun's positions, together with the local newspapers, weather bureau etc.

Source by Dr. Arafat El_Ashi (Director) Muslim World League Canada Office

Fasting frees up energy so healing can begin. Fasting is a wonderful antidote for our usual over-indulgences. There is nothing wrong with enjoying our food, but excess food on a continuous basis does create a burden for the body. When it must handle more than is comfortable and appropriate for it, it will suffer. Imagine at work how you feel when you're handed a huge workload--more than you can handle in your 8-10 hour day, more than is comfortable and appropriate for your job title (or salary level). You are under duress. But you WILL cope. You MUST cope. You must make decisions. You attend to the most important and urgent of matters and set aside those that can wait for another day. This is what our bodies do when they're overworked; they tuck things away for another day. Whatever tasks can be postponed will be. And more work is dumped on

them at every meal- or snack-time, whether they're ready or not. This is why fasting is a beautiful gift you give to yourself. A vacation for your weary, overworked, under-appreciated body. During fasting, we rest our system from the constant onslaught of food stuffs. We usually think of food as giving us energy, so it can be a new way of thinking to understand how the food we eat actually requires energy. Digesting, assimilating and metabolizing--these activities require a great deal of energy. It is estimated that 65% of the body's energy must be directed to the digestive organs after a heavy meal.

Mental, emotional and Health benefits of fasting

Because fasting improves mental clarity and focus, it can become a tool in your life to give you greater freedom, flexibility, and energy to get done the things and projects that are important to you.

Many experienced fasters find it helpful to fast whenever they need an additional boost for a major project or deadline, e.g. writing a paper, preparing for a big presentation, getting ready for a long trip. Artists and writers often talk of foregoing food during great creative inspiration; that it helps to keep the momentum going. (Although, beginners must be warned that this won't be the case at first. Don't fast for a big event until you are more knowledgeable about your fasting reactions, and you're sure you won't get a "detox headache" or such.)

“Emotionally, you will feel calmer, clearer and happier. Fasters often report that depression lifts, goals begin to feel more obtainable as obstacles are put into proper focus. Doctors have reported patients experiencing improved concentration, less anxiety, sleeping better and waking more refreshed”

Sometimes it's hard to tell the difference between our emotional and mental aspects, where one begins and the other ends. Am I sad because I had this thought? Or did I have the thought because I've been feeling sad? Fasting has a way of clarifying those issues. Your

awareness can focus in more accurately and determine the source of some unpleasantness, that then snowballed into a mess. Once the source is identified, it's easy to see how overblown everything else was that came after

Spiritual benefits of fasting

And let's not forget the powerful effects of fasting on our spiritual connection. Another one of the benefits of fasting is that it promotes we take our attention inward, that we listen, become quiet. And that quiet quality time, you with you, will also allow, if you are willing, a greater sense of kinship with your Inner Being.

Without the continual addition of heavy foods into the system (and after any major detox symptoms have passed), the body takes on a lighter, less dense, feeling. This helps to create a subtle separation from ordinary physical reality and all its worldly things, and instead you begin to sense the presense and power of things beyond this world.

Meditation or prayer becomes clearer, higher states easier to attain, messages or guidance from higher realms clearer. Knowing you are loved and supported every minute of your day and of your life is something you begin to intuitively feel. Recognition that there truly is a higher plan or purpose will become more real as it is intuitively experienced rather than just intellectually understood. Your experiences will be deeply personal and unique. Sometimes, subtle too. You have to pay attention to the little things, you have to be quiet enough internally to pick up the nuances in a changed attitude or perception.

Overcoming Addictions

Through fasting, all forms of addictions can be disposed of. Addiction to drugs, cigarettes, and alcohol can be conquered more efficiently when one fasts, because it reduces the withdrawal symptoms. This makes it easy to control the craving for such substance, as the withdrawal symptoms are the main barrier that deters people from overcoming addiction.

Lower Cholesterol

When fasting, you naturally stay away from all forms of junk foods. Oily and greasy foods are the main cause of high cholesterol and so fasting significantly lowers the level of cholesterol in the body. Also during fasting you can take in juices, fruits, and vegetables. These foods have minimal cholesterol and provide the body with nutrients.

Alertness

To increase mental alertness, nothing is better than fasting. This is because during fasting, the toxins are eliminated from the body. So, when the blood stream and the lymphatic system get cleared, the mental clarity can be used by the brain for thinking purpose.

Gastrointestinal Disorders

As a result of our faulty diet, most of us, nowadays, suffer from various gastrointestinal ailments. The most common of such problems are, undoubtedly, constipation, bloating, and gastritis. Fasting provides a healing touch to these ailments. When fasting, the gastrointestinal system gets the time to revitalize and also enhance its function. Thus after breaking the fast, the gastrointestinal system becomes more efficient and is less likely to develop ailments.

Blood Pressure

According to a study, people with high blood pressure can return to their normal blood pressure level after a fast. There is no need of any medication and to maintain the normal blood pressure level, they should undergo fasting periodically.

Weight Loss

Fasting naturally can make anyone lose weight. Since solid foods are less consumed during a fast, the body uses the accumulated fat for the energy required, which results in loss of weight.

Reason behind fasting in different religions

There are many reasons behind the fasting. In Hinduism indicates the denial of the physical needs of the body for the sake of spiritual gains. Hindu believe it is not easy to unceasingly pursue the path of spirituality is one's daily life. We are harangued by a lot of considerations, and

worldly indulgences do not allow us to concentrate on spiritual attainment. Therefore a worshipper must strive to impose restraints on him self/ her self to get his mind focused. And one form of restraint is fasting.

Self - Discipline

- However, fasting is not only a part of worship, but a great instrument for self - discipline too. It is a training of the mind and the body to endure and harden up against all hardships, to persevere under difficulties and not give up.
- According to Hindu philosophy, food means gratification of the senses and to starve the senses is to elevate them to contemplation. The wise once said, "When the stomach is full, the intellect begins to sleep. Wisdom becomes mute and the parts of the body restrain from acts of righteousness."
- Eating good quality food. Fresh, unprocessed, nutrient-dense food is a must, regardless of eating style. So make food awareness a priority and make the best choices you can afford.
- Eating slowly. Rushing through meals impairs digestion and confuses satiety centers in the brain. So slow down. It helps control intake and improve your enjoyment of eating.
- Eating reasonable portions. When calories are controlled, progress is made. Overeating is still possible with IF, just as it is with every other eating style. So pay attention to food amount.
- Eating when you're hungry, and not eating when you're not. Learning to tune into your appetite and listen to your true hunger is important. Using mindfulness during meals is a best practice for healthy eating.
- Regular exercise. Of course, exercise and healthy eating are two sides of the same coin. They both help promote health and a lean body but in different ways.

The following advice has been provided following consultation with medical experts and Islamic scholars.

Heartburn

- Fasting usually reduces the amount of stomach acid, which digests food and kills

bacteria. However, thoughts of food, or the smell of it, make the brain tell the stomach to produce more acid, which can lead to heartburn.

- People who regularly take medicine for indigestion – such as antacids, antihistamines or proton pump inhibitors – are advised to continue taking them. A good time to do this could be with the pre-dawn meal.
- The control of heartburn or belching can be aided by eating in moderation and avoiding oily, deep-fried or very spicy food. Reducing your caffeine intake and stopping smoking can also be of benefit.
- Preparations such as peppermint oil may help reduce belching or abdominal discomfort. Sleeping with your head raised on a few pillows and long-term weight loss may also help prevent heartburn.

Poor control of diabetes

- People who regularly inject insulin are advised not to fast, as the potential risk to health – both in the short and long term – of not taking insulin is too great. People who have their diabetes under control using tablets should seek careful advice from their GP before starting a fast.
- Regular self-monitoring of your blood glucose is strongly advised. Low blood sugar levels (a 'hypo') are dangerous, and if untreated may lead to fainting or fits.
- Feeling dizzy, sweaty and disoriented may all suggest a hypo. If a person with diabetes has these symptoms, they should immediately have a sugary drink, or place sugar or a sugar-rich sweet below their tongue.

Headache

- This common problem has many causes. Headaches during a fast could be due to dehydration or hunger, poor rest, or the absence of addictive substances such as caffeine or nicotine.
- A moderate and balanced diet, especially not missing the pre-dawn meal, taking in enough fluids and, if necessary, some painkillers

such as paracetamol, can help prevent or reduce the risk of headache.

- Headaches can also be prevented by not exposing yourself to direct sunlight, wearing a hat when out, using sunglasses to reduce the effect of glare from the sun and relieving any tense muscles with a short, gentle massage.

Dehydration

- Dehydration is common during a fast. The body continues to lose water and salts through breathing, perspiring and urinating.
- If you don't drink sufficiently before a fast your risk of dehydration is increased. This risk is higher in older people and in those taking tablets such as diuretics.
- If you are unable to stand up due to dizziness, or you are disoriented, you should urgently drink regular, moderate quantities of water – ideally with sugar and salt – or Dioralyte or Lucozade.
- If you faint due to dehydration, your legs should be raised above your head by others, and when you awake, you should urgently rehydrate as outlined above.

Constipation

When you are fasting, being active, drinking regularly and eating healthily will help to keep your bowel motions regular. Include lots of fruit and vegetables in your diet and increase the fibre content of your food using bran. If the problem persists, a short course of laxatives may help.

Stress

Lack of food and water, changes of routine and shorter periods of sleep can cause stress. It's important to deal with any potential sources of stress to stop any harmful effects. This can be helped by not taking on more than you can handle, not playing sports in the hot sun, controlling your anger and not smoking.

Weight control

Food consumed during the pre-dawn and dusk meals may lead to some unintended weight gain. But if you approach the fast with discipline, it can be an opportunity to lose weight and become healthier.

In general summary

- Comparisons between different studies of religious fasting are difficult due to several confounding variables. In Hinduism fixed calendar of Navaratri both winter and summer, only few days difference but in Islam fasting time is highly dependent upon the time of the seasonal year that Ramadan occurs as well as the locations latitudinal distance from the equator.
- Collectively, the religious fasts featured in this review emphasize the importance of quality dietary intake in eliciting favourable effect on health.
- Diet plays an integral role in the religious customs of a variety of faiths. For many religions, this role is manifested in the form of specialized fasting periods. Although religious fasting is often a time of great spiritual growth, it can also be a time of great improvement to one's physical health. This review highlights the potential of different religious fasts as forms of dietary modification. It is our hope that the information provided within this review will initiate the design and performance of future investigations focused on the health benefits of religious fasting.

CONCLUSION

The websites I found had an enormous amount of information both for and against the use of fasting as a method of preventative medicine. On the one hand, fasting sounds like a good way to eliminate wastes that have built up in the body for many years. There is research showing that certain ailments have been helped with fasting, but usually when it was later accompanied by a change in diet and lifestyle. Medical literature also shows that the side effects of long-term fasting are potential hazards to health and that change in diet is sufficient without utilizing drastic measures to bring the body back to homeostasis.

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