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Fast and feel good for life

BY NOW I hope you have an open mind to the many benefits of fasting and are excited about giving it a go. If you start the 48 Hour Diet soon you'll be in great shape for your summer holiday. Feeling fabulous in a bikini is a great incentive but what about the future? Today I'm going to show you how you can fit fasting into your life long-term.

I've been down the diet road myself so many times I could be a tour guide. I know that most diets don't work. Why? Because diets make you hungry.

Quick fixes can make your metabolic rate plummet and your appetite soar. If you go on a crash diet, reducing your calories to below 1,000 for a few weeks the chances are you'll feel hungry and fed up most of the time. That means as soon as the holiday starts you'll eat all the foods you've been denying yourself and regain lost weight (and more) in no time.

The trick is to keep your body feeling fuller for longer which is what the 48 Hour Diet is designed to do. It doesn't take a genius to recognise that if you feel hungry less often, you will eat less and therefore lose weight.

The great news is you can carry on with my fasting patterns for as long as you like. Even when you achieve your goal weight, you can fast long term if it feels right for you.

Listen to your body, though, and if it doesn't feel right adjust your approach or stop.

Successful fasting takes some trial and error and it may simply be that you need to make more general improvements to your eating habits before your body is ready to try fasting.

It's OK to cheat. Even if your fasting is going to plan it's absolutely fine to give yourself a day off here and there. In fact there's a trend among lifestyle-fasting devotees to have a "cheat day" once a week.

If you'd like to relax a bit at the weekend or enjoy a special occasion this will do you no harm. It may even make fasting easier to stick to. Many people find that once they get into the habit of lifestyle fasting a pattern emerges that suits them best.

Be careful though. It's easy to undo all your hard work if you allow yourself to overdo it or eat all the

All this week nutritionist **AMANDA HAMILTON** has shared her amazing 48 Hour Diet. In her final instalment she explains how to live well now and in the future



wrong things. Stick to the nutrition rules as closely as you can most of the time. That means eating a well-balanced varied diet of "real" food such as lean meat, oily fish, beans, grains, fresh fruit and vegetables, low-fat dairy and eggs. Cut down on alcohol as it's full of empty calories and sugar. If you do need a chocolate fix then stick to the dark variety as most people need less of it to feel satisfied.

Remember fasting also boosts energy, aids sleep, de-stresses, revives and rejuvenates, is anti-ageing and keeps your heart healthy.

Of course fasting isn't the only way to tackle these conditions. Improving your diet generally, becoming more active, quitting smoking, drinking in moderation and limiting stress are all important. Yet fasting might just be the secret weapon you haven't yet discovered.

DO TRY to stay active. While it's probably true that exercise alone isn't going to get you the body you want if you pay no attention to what you eat, dieting without exercise isn't a good idea either. After all exercise comes with an impressive array of health benefits itself: from heart and lung health to stress relief and maintaining strong bones.

Getting the motivation to exercise can be hard when you're "on a diet" because you are always eating less than you're burning off and you often feel like you don't have the energy. The good thing about

fasting is that the gaps between meals are longer so when you do eat you get to eat more. This means you can structure your exercise around the times you have eaten and are feeling more energetic.

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ALTERNATIVE FASTS

THE 16-HOUR LIFESTYLE PLAN

Popular with gym bunnies in search of the body beautiful the 16:8 fast involves eating all your meals within an eight-hour window and fasting for the remaining 16 hours.

Most people find that having an early lunch around noon, followed by an afternoon snack and dinner between 7pm and 8pm works well. That way the next day you skip breakfast and eat again at lunch. An

alternative is to miss dinner and have a substantial breakfast. It's entirely up to you and your lifestyle.

On this plan your portion sizes need to be slightly bigger than on the 48 Hour Diet so give yourself a little bit more.

THE JUICE FAST

Long-term fasters have often relied on juice-only diets to eliminate toxins from their body. It's like pressing the accelerator button on your body's

waste disposal unit. This plan consists of five freshly-made juices and a broth, spread evenly throughout the day.

Ideally follow a juice fast for between one and five days, once or twice a year. They are often undertaken as part of a retreat where your day would typically include yoga, gentle walks or relaxing spa treatments.

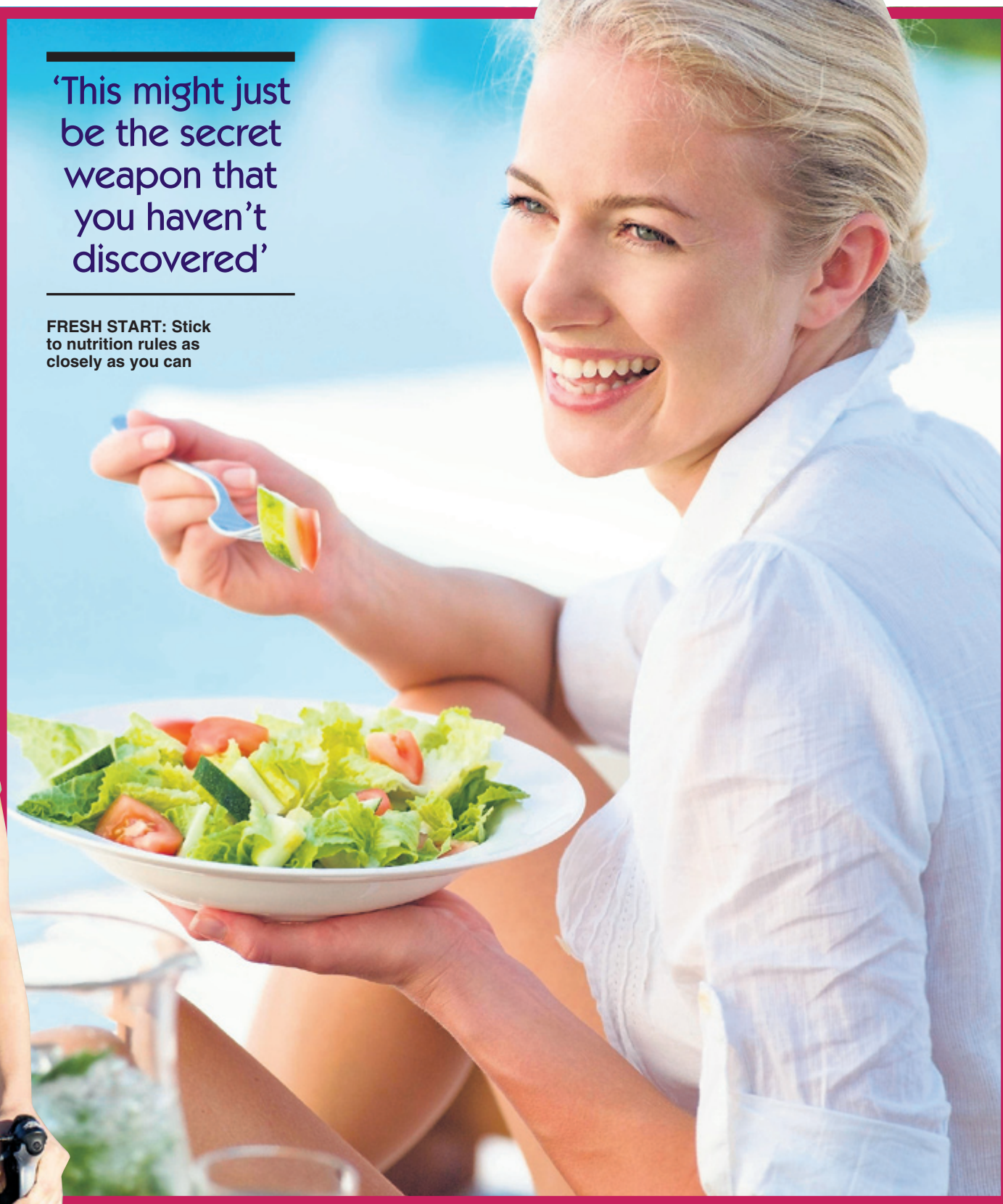
And it's for this reason that most people try a juice fast over a weekend when they can make time and space to enjoy it.



BE HAPPY

'This might just be the secret weapon that you haven't discovered'

FRESH START: Stick to nutrition rules as closely as you can



Pictures: REX/GETTY

GOLDEN RULES FOR STAYING ON TRACK

- Be willing to change. To make a success of long-term fasting you need to be determined to step out of your comfort zone and do what it takes to build momentum towards healthier habits.
- Stand up to your friends. When you fast, your steely reserve, extra energy and shrinking waistline are intimidating. Some people will want to sabotage you. They probably do it unconsciously so don't give them a hard time. Just be armed with your excuse: "Sorry I'm allergic to Victoria sponge," and move on.
- Have willpower. You know as well as I do how easily healthy intentions can be swept aside. The morning visit to the coffee shop for a caffeine fix can soon end up including a muffin, the one glass of wine becomes a bottle and snuggling up on the sofa replaces the trip to the gym. Keep yourself focused.
- Sleep like a baby. Quality sleep, as opposed to an alcohol-induced comatose state, is incredibly helpful. Disrupted sleep affects appetite-inducing hormones and this can make you feel hungrier.
- Be clear about the results you want. Knowing why you want to adopt a long-term fasting approach can help you remain motivated. Be positive. It's less about not "wanting to be fat" and more about "being slim, full of energy and clear headed".
- Go easy on yourself. There will be times when you may fall off the wellness wagon. If this happens then you must refrain from beating yourself up about it. Instead, encourage yourself with positive thoughts. Praise yourself for wanting to improve your health and in as gentle a way as possible decide to dust yourself off and put the past behind you quickly.

MY TIPS FOR LONG-TERM SUCCESS

Q How long can I do the diet for?

A Once the weight is off I'd say incorporating fasting into your lifestyle is the best idea and bear in mind that there are more benefits than weight loss alone. A fast day once a week of 500 calories or intermittent fasting using the 16:8 method every now and then are all good options for the long term.

Q I've reached my weight-loss goal. How can I maintain my weight on the diet?

A Congratulations. Yes increasing portions is fine for the long term but always watch your appetite and

stop when you feel full. Portion control can be helped by my online menu planner (links portion sizes to the amount of calories you burn) on my website at amandahamilton.com.

Q Can I take a week (or two) off the diet for a holiday?

A Of course. Special occasions should always be enjoyed. Fasting can be used safely to undo any damage.

Q If I need to lose weight quickly for a special event can I up the fasting days to three?

A Fasting will lose its benefits if it is done too much. It's all about

keeping your body in the optimum fat burning zone so it's best to stick to the rules.

Q What if I lose too much weight?

A The pounds can shift quickly in the beginning, especially if there is a lot of weight to lose but it should settle at a steady 1.5 to 3lbs per week to be sustainable. If you think you are losing too much you should only fast to offset any periods of indulgence and every now and then for the health benefits. Make sure your portions of healthy food are generous enough to keep you well-nourished when you are not fasting.