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your first week on the days a week and enjoy delicious resh food – including snacks – for

the other five days. If you have already started the olan you might be wondering about the benefits of fasting, other than weight loss. Well, if someone told you there was a pill that could reduce the risk of diabetes and heart disease and keep you looking and feeling young you'd be tempted to take it

wouldn't you?

The good news is that intermittent fasting is now considered an acceptable approach for all of the above.

Plus provided you're sensible about t there are no side effects other than 'vucky" at first but that is usually due to the headaches you get from caffeine withdrawal. These effects



don't usually last long and most people find they are outweighed by the benefits of fasting.

It is important to establish that course, *is* dangerous. This is about or eating less from time to time.

Fasting shifts the pounds, improve health and can help heal somebody's relationship with food which is often at the heart of the struggle

However there is a lot to be said for common sense. No one knows your body better than you do. If it doesn't feel right either adjust your approach or stop. Successful fasting involves an element of trial and erro so it may take a while before you can fit it into your lifestyle.

Here are just some of the benefits of the 48 Hour Diet.

HEART

Eighty per cent of cardiovascular disease is thought to be caused by poor lifestyle choices such as a oad diet. Some of the risk factors. ncluding high levels of fat and sugar in the blood, can be improved

Most studies on fasting show that it reduces levels of triglyceride, a kind of fat, and improves the ratio of triglycerides to "good" cholesterol or high-density lipoprotein (HDL). HDL is important because it helps remove excess cholesterol from the bloodstream

In animal studies, resistance to what is known as "ischaemic injury has also been seen. This is the type of artery damage that's associated with the build-up of plaques and hardening of the arteries.

Cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of death worldwide and something that affects us all. NHS statistics show that in

England in 2007 people aged over 60 each received an average of 42 prescription items (each time you receive a prescription for an individual drug from your doctor it counts as one prescription item). That's a lot of drugs.

illnesses at bay and its risk factors is the most commonly prescribed. I often meet people who want to change their eating habits not just

because they'd like to look and feel by the amount of medication that their own parents are on.

As fasting becomes more popular

people are becoming attracted to it as a lifestyle choice that might help their heart and circulatory system stay healthy for longer.

BRAIN

If you've ever found yourself befuddled about where vou've left your keys, phone or purse, you'll know that memory loss is frightening

Nutritionist AMANDA

HAMILTON explains

how her exclusive

plan keeps chronic

on Aging, mice that fasted every other day remembered their way around a maze more easily than mic put on a sugary diet.
What about skipping breakfast,

seen as an important "brain food"? Interestingly children who eat breakfast tend to perform better in cognitive tests but this isn't the case for adults.

short-term food reduction doesn't impair cognitive function in adults. Prolonged dieting, on the other hand does. This means that the perceived eterioration in brain function may in fact have a psychological cause.

result of the stress of being "on a diet" rather than the diet itself.

It's true that the brain uses ucose for fuel but our bodies have enough stored glucose to see is through a short fast.

In one study published in the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition, scientists observed that fasting and non-fasting groups of adults performed similarly in cognitive tests, even after two days ithout food.

This is thought to relate to our caveman ancestors because when we don't have food available it's important we have the mental clarity to go out and find it.

DIABETES

With a typical Western diet it's easy to be hungry all the time. The idea of eating little and often, which is promoted by so many diets, is about giving it the nutrients that it can immediately put to use. Yet to burn off body fat your insulin

levels need to be low. If you eat little and often your body will always be potentially chronically high levels.

Insulin is the signal to your body to store energy from your food so it an be accessed later. It basically acts by unlocking cells and allowing individual molecules of glucose to enter. It also tells the cells to make nore protein and fat and to keep the existing fat locked away inside

This is all designed to keep blood sugar levels within a tightly controlled range. Any sugar not immediately required for energy has to be stored in the muscles or liver. High levels of nsulin in the body can increase the risk of insulin resistance as those ocks get "broken" and start having difficulties recognising the "key"

Over time, insulin resistance increases the risk of diabetes. It has also been linked to cardiovascular disease and cancer.

Most studies on fasting suggest that it has a beneficial effect on blood glucose control. Increasing the gaps between meals through fasting means that you get a spike n insulin after eating, then a longer period of time where insulin isn't

The idea is that this not only encourages your body to burn fat, it also helps to maintain its natural sensitivity to insulin.

ANTI-AGEING

Ageing begins when your normal process of cell regeneration and rebuilding slows down.

(IGF-1) tells our cells to grow and multiply. If IGF-1 is kept high our which is good if we're trying to build big muscles.

However it's less good if those cells become damaged and cancerous. High levels of IGF-1 have been linked to prostate cancer and postmenopausal breast cancer.

Gerontologist Valter Longo headed a team of researchers at the Jniversity of Southern California who focused on the effect of calorie restriction on the functioning of cells Research on mice found that

estricting calories extended lifespan by up to 40 per cent. Genetically engineering the mice o have low levels of IGF-1 did the

same thing. Meanwhile research on monkeys has shown that in most cases calorie estriction and intermittent fasting

helps them live longer. Sounds crazy, doesn't it? After all, how many times have we said that we'll "waste away" if we go a few hours without a decent meal.

• To order Eat, Fast, Slim: The Life-Changing Fasting Diet For Amazing Weight Loss And Optimum Health (Duncan Baird, £8.99) with free UK delivery, call 0871 988 8367 (10p/min from BT landlines) with your card details, or send a cheque payable to Express Bookshop at PO Box 200, Falmouth TR11 4WJ or order via expressbookshop.co.uk

• For more information on fasting programmes visit amandahamiltondiet.com Quote dailyexpress13 at the checkout before May 31 to receive 20 per cent off all weight-loss

HOW TO FAST AND GET FIT

EXERCISE is important when fasting, not just when to do it but

If you lead a very active lifestyle it's best to avoid prolonged or hard exercise on your two fast days. Gentle walks, Pilates or yoga are fine but if you crave an intense workout do it a couple of hours after your first meal the following day.

Make sure that if you're exercising the day before your 500-calorie fasting day you have a proper meal

The fasting plan I showed you yesterday covers all your nutritional requirements. However to ensure you're getting everything your body needs I encourage you to eat more during your eating "windows" if you

feel hungry. Keep healthy snacks to hand so that you're not tempted by junk food if hunger pangs strike.
For those who are less active,

exercise doesn't just mean sweating it out at the gym. The World Health Organisation recommends that to stay healthy adults aged 18 to 64 need to do a minimum of five 30-minute workouts a week.

A brisk walk, a spot of housework or some much-needed gardening are great ways of staying active which work well with a busy lifestyle Find an activity you enjoy, it's never too late to start and even small changes are beneficial.

Why not book a walking holiday, sign up for a charity jog or volunteer for a local conservation project? Exercising with a friend can make keeping fit fun. Many gyms, leisure centres and community halls run classes in Zumba, salsa or even

If you end each session with a coffee and a catch-up you can perk up your social life at the same time.

MAKE GENTLE EXERCISE A HABIT

KEEP IT VARIED Challenge yourself. Variety is vital as you can get into a rut with vour exercise programme just like with anything else. Monitor your progress. and plan to add a little more each week.

JUMP FOR JOY:

Eating less can

BE SENSIBLE The benefits of activity almost always outweigh the risks but if you have a health

condition or are iust starting out your doctor will be able to advise on anv activities that you should

DO YOUR MATHS Take the stairs instead

avoid or take

extra care with.

of using the lift or get off the bus one stop early and fit extra movement into your day. Without actually working out you could in 12 months.



THE 48 HOUR DIET TOMORROW: HOW