

Q | Is it safe to do a 2-day juice fast?

A | Yes, if you're healthy.

Fasting for a few days probably won't hurt you, if you're in your 20s or 30s and in excellent health, says Susan Roberts, PhD, a professor of nutrition and psychiatry at Tufts University and author of *The "I" Diet*. But watch out for extra physical challenges: Extreme temperatures, for instance, can make fasting unsafe, leaving you vulnerable to fainting, or hypothermia when it's cold. And if you're over 40, fasting is never a good idea.

The real question is, why would you want to? If you're fasting to lose fat, it won't work. "For starters, when you fast, your metabolism

Go ahead, eat!
Fasting might not hurt you, but it won't help you lose weight.



shuts down," Roberts says. "It won't rev up until you start eating again." Not only will you burn fewer calories at rest, but you won't have the firepower to do much

of anything, let alone exercise. Deprived of energy and nutrients, you'll likely be irritable and anxious; you'll also be more prone to headaches and bad breath.

If you do see a change on the scale, it will be mostly due to loss of water (which you'll regain once you start to eat again) plus muscle (which is bad to lose, because muscle helps your body burn calories). In the end? "You'll have that same padding of fat around a smaller muscle base—not a good thing," Roberts says.

The best way to shed pounds: Cut calories while still fueling yourself with a balance of lean protein, complex carbs, and heart-healthy fats. Eat at least enough to support your base metabolic rate (BMR)—about 1,200 to 1,500 calories a day for most women. (You can calculate yours at Health.com/bmr.) It's less sexy than the latest juice fast, but it's a lot more sustainable in the long run. —SHAUN CHAVIS

EAT (YES, EAT!) TO LOSE WEIGHT

Instead of fasting, fill up on foods that have a lot of water, fiber, or both—such as fruit, veggies, and beans. Add lean protein, fat-free dairy, and whole grains so you won't miss important nutrients. Try:



> **Melon Medley**
Toss 2 cups melon balls (cantaloupe, honeydew, or watermelon) with 1 teaspoon honey; garnish with mint sprigs. **145 calories**



> **Chopped Salad**
Toss 1 cup white beans or chickpeas with ½ cup each chopped tomato, cucumber, and bell pepper; add sliced green onion and a splash of red wine vinegar. **356 calories**



> **Berry Smoothie**
In a blender, combine 1 cup plain, fat-free yogurt and 1 cup unsweetened frozen berries; blend until smooth. **177 calories**



> **Grilled Shrimp Skewers**
Season 12 large peeled shrimp with spice rub (try Dean & DeLuca's Jamaican Jerk Rub, \$9; DeanDeLuca.com); thread onto skewers, and grill. Enjoy with 1 cup diced papaya. **120 calories**

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