NHA: The Science and Practice of Water-Only Fasting

Since the inception of the American Natural Hygiene Society in 1948 to its present status as the National Health Association (NHA), the NHA continues to be separate and distinct from all other health organizations by its unique, unwavering commitment to the science and practice of water-only fasting (WF). Beginning with early pioneers including Drs. Shelton, Esser, Gian-Cursio, Scott, Sidhwa, Burton, Gross, and others, and followed by subsequent generations of fasting doctors, these physicians redefined alternative, natural healthcare by helping countless thousands recover their health with WF.

Through the years, the interest in fasting has waxed and waned with cautious approval, misinformation, and unfounded concerns, while currently achieving a renewed interest and popularity with the general population, as well as numerous physicians and scientists. The successful clinical results of fasting care, coupled with established research on the science of fasting and food restriction, have only intensified the need for more widespread fasting care and more evidence-based research on the clinical benefits of WF. This is exemplified in the ongoing work of the TrueNorth Health Foundation at the vanguard of clinical fasting research under the direction of Dr. Alan Goldhamer.

Water-Only Fasting

By definition, WF is the complete abstinence from all food and liquids except water for some extended period of time. There is an extensive body of clinical evidence supporting the use of WF for a wide range of health problems. Scientific evidence continues to reveal and shed light on the reasons and cellular mechanisms for these beneficial effects.

The incredible effects of WF are the result of unique and remarkable changes that occur in the body as a direct consequence of food deprivation. When you begin to fast, blood sugar levels drop, insulin is decreased, and the hormone glucagon is increased to replenish blood sugar from the sugar reserves (glycogen) in liver and muscle cells. However, within a few days of fasting the sugar reserves are depleted, and the body is compelled to create energy from body fat and protein. By the third day of WF, protein is used more sparingly as the body shifts to fat metabolism and the production of ketones (ketogenesis) to provide energy for the body and brain.

The loss of protein and the depletion of blood sugar is tempered throughout a fast by resting as much as possible. If you are too active during a fast, body responses can be more unstable, including more rapid muscle loss, increased blood pressure, and blood sugar decline.

It is important to understand that WF is a fundamentally a resting process that harbors energy for healing, repair, and rejuvenation. When dietary nutrients are eliminated, cells shift from typical growth and reproduction to energy conservation, maintenance, and repair.

As evidence of this, insulin, growth hormone, and insulin-like growth factor 1 (IGF-1, which is abnormally increased by eating excessive high-protein animal products and fat- and sugar-laden junk food), which can all promote cancer and tumor growth in adults, are reduced during WF. This reduction of growth factors combined with food deprivation protects normal cells while compromising cancer cells, which are less able to adapt to extreme food deprivation. In fact, just a few days of WF before conventional cancer chemotherapy has been shown to reduce the debilitating, adverse effects of drug treatment on normal cells while increasing the susceptibility of a variety of cancer cells to chemotherapy.

Every second of every day, the cells of the body are taking in nutrients and producing waste and by-products of routine metabolism. In addition to this internal toxemia (toxic chemicals in the bloodstream), there are a variety of...
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The body-mind changes evoked by the fasting process make it a valuable option to support healing and recovery in lieu of more risky conventional medical interventions. It is one of the most efficient and powerful tools to jump-start and maintain any health program. However, due to the panorama of potential responses and symptoms that can occur during WF, the NHA recommends fasting under the supervision of doctors trained in fasting care. This will ensure proper screening and evaluation, adequate hydration, proper refeeding, and monitoring to certify that you are a good candidate for fasting and that fasting is in your best interest.

REFERENCES