FIRST-TIMER'S MANUAL

The 72-Hour Fast

A structured 72-hour period without caloric intake, followed by deliberate re-nutrition. The purpose is to understand how the body adapts to the absence of incoming energy while maintaining hydration, electrolytes and safety.

Don’t fast harder. Fast smarter.

YOUR GUIDE

This is not a detox challenge, starvation protocol or endurance contest.

A guided, hour-by-hour walkthrough: what to prepare, what's allowed, what your body is doing at each stage, when to keep going, and how to come out of it well.

- Preparation checklist & training guidance
- What's allowed during the fast
- Complete 72-hour timeline
- Check-ins at every stage
- Decision points: continue, reassess, stop
- How to break the fast, with broth recipe
- Science & myth-busting section
- Fasting log & reflection pages

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HOW TO USE THIS MANUAL

Read sections 01–02 the day before you start. During the fast, open the section for the hour you're in and fill in its check-in. Finish with the log and reflection pages.

01

SECTION 01 · PREPARATION

Before You Begin

A 72-hour fast is a significant period without caloric intake. It is not appropriate for everyone, and the fact that you can tolerate hunger does not automatically mean a prolonged fast is appropriate for you.

WHO SHOULD NOT DO THIS WITHOUT MEDICAL GUIDANCE

Do not undertake a 72-hour fast without appropriate medical guidance if any of the following apply:

- Diabetes or significant glucose-management issues
- Pregnancy or breastfeeding
- Significant kidney, liver or heart disease
- Medicines that may be affected by fasting
- Being underweight or malnourished
- A current or previous eating disorder

If you are acutely ill, recover first rather than fasting.

PREPARATION — 24 HOURS BEFORE

- [ ] Choose an exact start and finish time.
- [ ] Eat normally; do not binge or attempt a giant final meal.
- [ ] Prioritise a balanced meal pattern with adequate protein, carbohydrates and fluids.
- [ ] Prepare a measured, sugar-free electrolyte source.
- [ ] Prepare your chicken broth and decide what your first meal will be.
- [ ] Reduce demanding training and protect your sleep.
- [ ] Tell someone close to you that you are doing the fast.

TRAINING GUIDANCE

This is not the time to test performance. Walking, mobility and gentle stretching are reasonable for many healthy adults. Heavy lifting, HIIT, long endurance sessions and maximal efforts are better postponed.

STARTING CHECK-IN

Start time _____

Sleep	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Energy	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Mood	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Hydration ○ Good ○ Moderate ○ Poor

> “Know your reason before hunger arrives.

02

SECTION 02 · THE PROTOCOL

The Fasting Framework

The baseline protocol in this manual is a strict fast: no caloric food or drink. Water, sugar-free electrolytes, black coffee or espresso, and unsweetened tea are the practical options.

ALLOWED

Water

Still or sparkling

Electrolytes

Sugar-free; follow the product label or clinician guidance. **Coconut water** — plain and unsweetened, in small amounts, as it contains some natural sugar.

Coffee

Black coffee or espresso; optional and moderate.

Tea

Unsweetened tea or herbal tea — e.g. **chamomile** or **rooibos**, both naturally caffeine-free and good for evenings.

NOT PART OF THE STRICT FAST

- × Nuts
- × Chocolate
- × Chia
- × Fruit
- × Juice
- × Milk
- × Cream
- × Sugar
- × Honey
- × Protein powder

All of these provide calories and therefore move the protocol away from a strict fast. A modified fast can be a separate approach, but it should not be confused with the baseline protocol.

NOTE

Electrolyte needs vary. Avoid assuming that more sodium, potassium or magnesium is always better. People with hypertension, kidney or heart conditions, or medication-related fluid/electrolyte considerations should seek individual medical advice.

> The cleaner the fast, the easier it is to understand what your body is actually doing.

03

SECTION 03 · HOURS 0–12

The Transition

0–12 H | 12–24 H | 24–36 H | 36–48 H | 48–60 H | 60–72 H

The body is still processing the previous meal while insulin begins to fall and stored fuel remains readily available. Early hunger can be strongly influenced by routine, meal timing and expectation.

YOUR FOCUS

Hydrate normally, continue ordinary low-intensity activity and observe hunger rather than treating every appetite signal as an emergency.

- Hydrate
- Move gently
- Observe

HUNGER WAVE?

Try one of these, then reassess after **15–30 minutes**.

01 Drink water

02 Change activity

03 Take a short walk

04 Have an unsweetened tea

QUICK CHECK

Energy	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Hunger	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Mood	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Symptoms	_____
	_____

04

SECTION 04 · HOURS 12–24

The Metabolic Shift

0–12 H | **12–24 H** | 24–36 H | 36–48 H | 48–60 H | 60–72 H

As fasting continues, liver glycogen is progressively depleted, fat mobilisation increases and ketone production rises. The exact timing varies with the previous diet, activity, body composition and individual metabolism.

WHAT YOU MAY NOTICE

- Hunger waves
- Headache
- Feeling cold
- Increased urination
- Changes in energy
- Changes in concentration
- Food cravings

These experiences are not automatically dangerous, but persistent or worsening symptoms deserve attention.

IF YOU FEEL OFF

01 — FIRST
Stop and assess how you actually feel.

02 — THEN
Hydrate and consider your planned electrolytes.

03 — NEXT
Reduce activity and caffeine if needed.

04 — DECISION
If symptoms persist or worsen, reassess whether continuing is appropriate.

✎ QUICK CHECK

Energy	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Hunger	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Mood	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Symptoms	_____

05

SECTION 05 · HOURS 24–36

Entering Extended Fasting

0–12 H | 12–24 H | **24–36 H** | 36–48 H | 48–60 H | 60–72 H

Ketones become an increasingly important fuel source, particularly for the brain, while the body continues to draw on stored fat and other substrates. The experience can change substantially from person to person.

PAUSE & ASSESS

1. Am I hydrated?
2. Can I function normally?
3. Are my symptoms mild and stable?
4. Am I choosing to continue, rather than feeling pressured to prove something?

✎ CHECK-IN

Energy	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Hunger	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Mental clarity	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Physical comfort	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

> “The goal is not to win against hunger. The goal is to understand your response to it.

06

SECTION 06 · HOURS 36–48

Deep Fasting

0–12 H | 12–24 H | 24–36 H | **36–48 H** | 48–60 H | 60–72 H

The metabolic transition is now well established: insulin remains low, fat oxidation and ketone production are elevated, and nutrient-sensing pathways respond to the absence of incoming energy.

AUTOPHAGY: KEEP THE CLAIM HONEST

Fasting is associated with autophagy-related signalling, but there is no validated human stopwatch showing that autophagy suddenly ‘turns on’ at a particular hour or reaches a universal peak at 48 or 72 hours.

Human measurement is difficult and tissue-specific. Treat autophagy as a biological process influenced by fasting, not a countdown target.

NOTE

A fast is not a performance test. Reduced training output is an expected trade-off when energy intake is absent.

REMINDER

Stick to the training guidance from section 01 — walking, mobility and gentle stretching only.

✎ CHECK-IN

Energy	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Hunger	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Mood	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Symptoms	_____

07

SECTION 07 · HOURS 48–60

The Deeper Phase

0–12 H | 12–24 H | 24–36 H | 36–48 H | **48–60 H** | 60–72 H

Some people report calmness, mental clarity or reduced hunger. Others experience coldness, fatigue, poorer sleep or reduced physical performance. There is no requirement to feel a particular way for the fast to be ‘working.’

DECISION POINT

CONTINUE

You feel well, are functioning normally and symptoms are mild and stable.

REASSESS

Symptoms are persistent, worsening or interfering with normal function.

STOP

Red-flag symptoms appear or you no longer feel safe continuing.

> “ Discomfort is information. It is not a score.

SIMPLE CHECK-IN

Energy	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Hunger	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Mood	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Symptoms	_____

08

SECTION 08 · HOURS 60–72

The Final Stretch

0–12 H | 12–24 H | 24–36 H | 36–48 H | 48–60 H | 60–72 H

The final twelve hours are less about discovering another magical biological threshold and more about completing the protocol safely. There is no prize for turning 72 hours into 80.

PREPARE TO BREAK THE FAST

- [ ] Confirm your finish time.
- [ ] Have chicken broth ready.
- [ ] Have a moderate first meal planned.
- [ ] Avoid scheduling intense training immediately afterward.
- [ ] Give yourself time to eat slowly and observe how you respond.

✎ 72-HOUR CHECK-IN

Finish time _____

Energy 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Hunger 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Mood 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

How do I feel? _____

_____

72h You've reached the end of the protocol. **Finish on time** — the next step is a calm, deliberate return to food.

09

SECTION 09 · THROUGHOUT THE FAST

Movement & Recovery

What you do around the fast matters as much as the fast itself. Keep the body moving gently and give recovery priority.

RECOMMENDED

Movement

Walking, mobility, gentle stretching, easy daily activity

Recovery

Rest, sleep, normal hydration, calm evenings

Mindset

Use the fast to observe — not to chase suffering

AVOID

- × Heavy strength sessions
- × HIIT
- × Long endurance sessions
- × Maximal efforts
- × Large amounts of caffeine to compensate for fatigue

> Use the fast to observe — not to chase suffering.

10

SECTION 10 · REFEEDING

Breaking the Fast

The end of the fast is not the moment to celebrate with a huge meal. The aim is a calm transition back to normal nutrition.

STEP 01

Chicken broth

Start with approximately **250 mL** of chicken broth and drink it slowly. Pause and assess your stomach and overall comfort. If you are thirsty and comfortable, another modest serving can be taken over the following hour.

30–90 min

STEP 02

First meal

If you feel comfortable after the broth, have a moderate whole-food meal. A simple example is chicken or fish, potato or rice, cooked vegetables and a modest amount of olive oil.

SIMPLE CHICKEN BROTH

Ingredients

- Chicken carcass or ~500 g chicken bones
- 2 carrots
- 2 celery stalks
- 1 onion
- Parsley
- About 2 L water
- Salt to taste

Method

1. Simmer gently for 3–4 hours.
2. Strain.
3. Refrigerate promptly.
4. Reheat individual portions.

AT THE FIRST MEAL

- [ ] Eat slowly.
- [ ] Keep the portion moderate.
- [ ] Stop before you feel completely full.
- [ ] Observe digestion rather than immediately eating again.

> Don’t turn the end of a fast into a feast.

11

SECTION 11 · AFTER THE FAST

The First 24 Hours After

For a healthy, adequately nourished adult, a 72-hour fast does not automatically require a medical refeeding protocol.

Formal refeeding syndrome precautions are mainly relevant to people with significant malnutrition, prolonged inadequate intake and other risk factors. If you are nutritionally compromised or have had very little food for a longer period, medical guidance is appropriate.

RETURN TOWARD NORMAL

PRIORITISE

Protein, whole-food carbohydrates, vegetables, healthy fats and normal fluid intake.

MODERATE

Meal size and very rich or fatty foods initially.

AVOID

A huge ‘reward’ meal, alcohol and a binge of highly processed foods.

GOOD TO KNOW

There is no special detox diet required after the fast. The objective is simply to resume balanced nutrition and allow appetite and digestion to normalise.

> “ Resume balanced nutrition. Let appetite and digestion settle.

12

SECTION 12 · THE SCIENCE

What Actually Happens?

Separating what is well understood from what is still being researched — and from what fasting simply isn't.

WELL ESTABLISHED

During fasting, insulin falls, stored glycogen is progressively used, fat mobilisation increases and ketone production rises. The body shifts between fuels rather than switching from ‘sugar burning’ to ‘fat burning’ at one exact moment.

STILL BEING RESEARCHED

The precise timing and magnitude of autophagy in humans, the clinical significance of different fasting-induced cellular pathways, long-term longevity effects, and claims about stem-cell regeneration remain areas of active research.

WHAT FASTING IS NOT

It is not a magical detox. The liver and kidneys already perform the body's major detoxification and waste-handling functions. It is also not a guarantee of fat loss, muscle preservation, longevity or cellular regeneration.

13

SECTION 13 · MYTH-BUSTING

Myth vs Reality

The most common claims you will hear about a 72-hour fast — and what the evidence actually supports.

MYTH	REALITY
✕ *'72 hours detoxes the body.'*	✓ Fasting changes metabolism; it does not replace the body's normal liver and kidney functions.
✕ *'Autophagy starts exactly at 24 hours.'*	✓ Human timing is not precise enough to support a universal hour-by-hour claim.
✕ *'Longer is always better.'*	✓ More fasting means more physiological stress and is not automatically more beneficial.
✕ *'Hunger means something is wrong.'*	✓ Hunger is expected. Severe or worsening symptoms are different.
✕ *'A small mistake ruins everything.'*	✓ A caloric intake interrupts a strict fast, but it does not erase the physiological changes that preceded it.
✕ *'Coconut water is just electrolytes.'*	✓ It also contains some natural sugar — choose unsweetened and keep it to small amounts.
✕ *'72 hours guarantees stem-cell regeneration.'*	✓ That claim goes beyond what human evidence can currently establish.

14

SECTION 14 · YOUR LOG

Fasting Check-In

Use this page to record the experience rather than judge it. Patterns are often more useful than a single number.

TIME	ENERGY /10	HUNGER /10	MOOD	SYMPTOMS / NOTES
12 h				
24 h				
36 h				
48 h				
60 h				
72 h				

15

SECTION 15 · LOOKING BACK

Reflection

A useful fast should leave you with information, not simply a number of hours completed.

What surprised me?

What was hardest?

What helped?

What would I change next time?

Would I do another 72-hour fast? ○ Yes ○ No ○ Maybe

> A successful fast isn't measured by suffering. It is measured by preparation, awareness, discipline and knowing when to stop.

CODE9 FITNESS

Don't fast harder. Fast smarter.