

Side Effects and Remedies

Minor side effects are common when starting to fast, particularly if you're eating a diet high in refined carbohydrate. They will usually resolve as your body becomes adapted to this new way of eating.

WAYS TO MINIMIZE SIDE EFFECTS:

- Eat a low-carb or ketogenic diet prior to fasting (your body is already fuelling on dietary fat)
- Don't deviate from your diet (i.e. eat lots of junk food on the weekends)
- Fast consistently

HEADACHE, DIZZINESS, MENTAL FOG AND LETHARGY

The hormone insulin drops during fasting, which causes the kidneys to excrete excess salt and water, which may be responsible for these side effects. Frequent urination may also be noted.

THE SOLUTION:

- Put a pinch of natural salt (Himalayan or Celtic salt are two favourites) under your tongue or in a glass of water a few times throughout the day
- Drink some bone broth (with a good amount of salt) or non-starchy vegetable broth
- Drink some pickle juice (no sugar)
- If symptoms are severe or persist, end your fast. Always be safe while fasting.

DIARRHEA

This is one of the most common side effects. It may occur during the fast, or after breaking the fast. It is not clear why this happens, but it is thought that the body may be ridding itself of excess water. It may also be caused by oral magnesium supplements if you are taking them.

THE SOLUTION:

- First thing in the morning, stir one tablespoon of psyllium husk into one cup of water, let it sit for five to 10 minutes before drinking
- Repeat if necessary later in the day
- Make sure you drink an extra cup of broth or pickle juice on days you experience this unwanted side effect. You can also take an extra pinch or two of salt in your water as well.
- Switch your magnesium supplementation to magnesium glycinate or magnesium bis-glycinate

CONSTIPATION

You should expect bowel movements to slow down during fasting. If you're not eating, should you really expect to pass waste in the first place? But if you are feeling uncomfortable, try the following.

THE SOLUTION:

- Drink more water
- Take magnesium citrate to help hydrate your colon and get things moving along
- Exercise more
- **Expert Tip:** If all else fails, add some coconut oil or MCT oil to your tea or coffee in the morning. It's not a perfect fast but it'll get things moving and grooving again.

INSOMNIA AND FEELING ANXIOUS

During fasting, certain hormones (called counter regulatory hormones), including noradrenalin increase. This may increase energy and give people a feeling of well being, but sometimes, people have so much energy, they can't sleep.

THE SOLUTION:

- Practice proper bedtime etiquette by turning off electronics 90 minutes before bed, and wearing blue light glasses in the evening
- Take Epsom salt baths to help your body relax
- Lather yourself in magnesium oil or gel in the evening
- Take magnesium bis-glycinate or malate four to six hours before bed
- Scale back on the fasting (i.e. if you're doing a 36-hour fast, then maybe do a 24-hour fast and work your way up to doing a 36-hour fast after a few weeks of successful fasting)

ACID REFLUX OR HEARTBURN

Reflux tends to occur during fasting in people who have a long-standing history, rather than developing for the first time. With weight loss, reflux often improves dramatically. In the meantime, if it worsens during fasting, try one of these simple fixes.

THE SOLUTION:

- Add one to three tablespoons of lemon juice to your water throughout the day
- Add one to three tablespoons of raw, unfiltered apple cider vinegar to your water
- Avoid broth and pickle juice

GOUT

Fasting usually increases blood uric acid levels due to the salt and water loss from the body, but should not cause gout. However, if you notice gout flaring during fasting, try the following.

THE SOLUTION:

- Stick to intermittent fasting when you start (i.e. 24, 36 or 42 hours, three times a week)
- Add one to three tablespoons of lime juice to your water
- Take cherry root extract – this won't disrupt your fast
- Increase fasting gradually if you have a history of gout.

BAD BREATH OR 'KETO BREATH'

Following a ketogenic diet or intermittent fasting may cause a particular odor often called 'keto breath.' This is caused by a chemical called acetone, which is due to metabolism of fats, and it may cause a whitish tinge to the tongue. Don't worry! You're just burning fat, and it's a good thing. As fat loss slows, your breath will improve, but meanwhile you can try the following.

THE SOLUTION:

- Oil pulling with coconut oil two to three times a week (see handout on Oil Pulling)
- Brush your teeth more frequently throughout the day
- Use a tongue scraper
- Drink more water