

Fasting Terminology

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Fasting is one of the surest activities everyone has undergone, at least once in their life; be it for many objectives. We, ourselves have experienced its claimed benefits and have been fasting regularly with an objective to optimize health and wellbeing.

Fasting is an active area of research these days, as dietary modification specially calorie restriction is used as an intervention and there are various forms to it such as “intermittent fasting”, “time restricted feeding/eating”, “alternate day fasting”, “periodic fasting”, “modified alternate day fasting”.¹⁻³ There are various definitions, protocols and terminologies around fasting which have different outcomes and serve different purposes.¹⁻⁸ This issue too, comprises original research by Dr. Namrata Upadhyay which highlights its findings (pros and cons) on intermittent fasting. Intermittent fasting is periods of alternate eating and fasting which is being increasingly applied for weight loss, disease prevention and treatment.¹⁻⁷ “Inconsistencies in definitions also lead to challenges for practitioners, dietitians, and physicians when designing and conducting clinical trials, as well as when applying the available evidence in clinical practice.”⁸ Apropos, we came across this interesting article which can be helpful understanding fasting better, because it provides international expert consensus on terminologies regarding various aspects of fasting. This article by Koppold et al.⁸ briefs the first international consensus on fasting, using the Delphi methodology. The process involved discussion by international, multidisciplinary panel of researchers and clinicians; five online surveys and a live online conference. It, standardized 24 definitions of various fasting approaches in humans such as; fluid only fasting; modified fasting; intermittent fasting; intermittent energy restriction etc. Hence, advocates its use for uniformity so as to promote clarity, rigor, and cross-referencing in interrelated scientific fields. It “recommends employing the definitions published in this work for future publications and addressing missing details or unclear aspects in upcoming research. This approach is expected to further develop, revise, and refine fasting terminology in the years to come”.⁸

Fasting is a cornerstone of lifestyle modification; emerging as a non-pharmacological health intervention. Nowadays, even different mobile applications recommend differing fasting and nutrition regimens. Hence, to unlock their maximum potential, it is essential to use a standard terminology in order to bring uniformity in treatment, refeeding period and protocols.

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