

Editorial**Fitness and Ramadan****Mohsin Masud Jan**

Editor

Ramadan Kareem. Now that the Holy month has finally rolled around, for quite a lot of us, it presents a dilemma, to try and lose weight and in the end actually gain a few pounds when Eid rolls around. Ramadan is a time for self-reflection and turning one's focus inwards. The act of fasting is to remind yourself how others live and humble yourself. It's also the time of year that your training is most likely to suffer if you're fasting and all the gains you've made this year will be lost. But it doesn't have to be.

There's a lot to consider and a number of things you need to adjust in order to continue training while fasting; however it doesn't mean that your training has to stop. Rather than focus on what you can't do, focus on some of the known benefits that come from fasting and centre your training around those new goals.

Most of us, we end up binge eating at Iftar and Sehar, which in the end even leads to gaining a few pounds during Ramadan instead of losing a few. Now, Ramadan has a lot of potential to allow us to lose weight, the proof being the latest research between Intermittent Fasting and losing weight. I'll weigh in on that here; fasting has been gaining ground as a technique not just used to lose weight but can actually add years to your life. In fact Intermittent Fasting (IF) has trainers and dieticians around the world changing their long-held beliefs of 6 small meals a day. IF involves fasting for 16-20 hours and consuming all your daily calories and nutrients within a 4-6 hour window, which is pretty much what you do when you're fasting during Ramadan.

Therefore it only makes sense to continue exercising during Ramadan in order to take full advantage of some incredible health benefits such as:

- Restoring insulin sensitivity and nutrient partitioning, especially in those of us prone to snack on sugary foods throughout the day.

- Producing a calorie deficit which is ideal for those looking to reduce their body fat percentage (which is all of us right?)
- An increase in growth hormones which is great news for those of us looking to increase muscle mass and build strength (which is all of us right?)
- Lowering blood pressure, oxidative stress and even the risk of developing some cancers.
- Finally, it requires discipline and mental strength, something we can always use more of.

Now what we need to do is change up our training regimen, there being a few options, one to workout right before Iftar, which means you won't be able to workout at your max, but something is always better than nothing. The Second time to workout is right after Iftar, if you can manage to keep your Iftar light, you can actually consume water, preferable lemon water to replenish electrolytes during the workout. Third would be after Taraweeh, around 3 hours after Iftar, which, if allowed by your timetable, could be the best time, because it would allow you to workout at your maximum because of the nutrients consumed during Iftar. And finally, the fourth option is right before Sehar, which is possible only if allowed by your daily routine and your gym timings.

I would advise against working out during the day itself, as that would place too much strain on the body specifically during these long, extremely hot days.

Now, coming to nutrition, Fasting for a good 17 hours is no excuse to slack on your nutrition. You still need to nourish and provide your body with high quality nutrition during Ramadan. Admittedly, a pakora here and a samosa there won't really do much damage, but a proper healthy and balanced diet needs to be maintained for a major part of the month to see good results by the end.