

HOW FASTING BENEFITS YOUR HEALTH

Fasting does so much more than just reducing your weight. An expert chips in on how abstaining from eating can enhance your overall health.

With Hari Raya fast approaching, the fasting month is upon us. To Muslims, fasting is an exercise in self-restraint and one of the five pillars of Islam. Generally speaking, "(Fasting) is an abstinence or reduction of food for a defined period of time," explains Dr Bishnu Charan Pattnaik, a consultant physician at Columbia Asia Hospital Setapak. An absolute fast takes this further, as it means refraining from any kind of food and drink for a defined period of time. New research done by the United Kingdom's National Health Service shows that it could potentially reverse diabetes and repair the pancreas. Here, we find four other benefits fasting has on our bodies.

🕒 **Detoxify your body**

The other amazing benefit of fasting is its ability to get rid of toxins by reducing the body's oxidative stress. Detoxification is a normal process of eliminating toxins from your body through the colon, kidney, liver, lungs, and even the skin. So, how does fasting aid the process? When there's no food, your body turns to its fat reserves for energy. When fat reserves are used during a fast, they release the stored chemicals from the fatty acids into the system for eliminations through your organs.

🕒 **Lower risk of heart disease**

"Fasting may reduce risks of cardiovascular disease by reducing cholesterol level, oxidative stress, and systemic blood pressure," says Dr Bishnu. According to a review published by the *British Journal of Diabetes and Vascular Disease*, people with obesity or type 2 diabetes who fast on consecutive or alternate days acquired cardioprotective benefits and even experienced better heart health. Intermittent fasting plays a big role in reducing blood pressure, improving circulating glucose and lipid levels, and enhancing metabolic efficiency.



🕒 **Delay ageing**

Believe it or not, Dr Bishnu claims that fasting helps to reduce the release of certain growth factors – activated by the nutrients present in food – which have been shown to accelerate ageing and mortality. On the other side of the world, research conducted by the University of South California found that adopting a diet plan that mimics the effects of fasting could boost neural regeneration, in addition to improving learning and memory.

🕒 **Reduce inflammation**

Researchers at Yale School of Medicine recently discovered that a compound produced by the body when dieting or fasting can block a part of the immune system involved in several inflammatory disorders. In an article published by the US National Library of Medicine, researchers discovered that inflammation decreases during intermittent fasting.