



# HEALTH NOTES



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Adventist Medical  
Evangelism Network

AMEN's mission is to motivate, train, and equip Seventh-day Adventist healthcare professionals to team with pastors and members, uniting the church to restore Christ's ministry of healing to the world, hastening His return.

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## Benefits of Fasting

**Fasting** is going without eating for a day or more. Partial fasts restrict eating to fruit, juices or just certain foods for a period of time.

In Bible times fasting was practiced when people repented of their sins (1 Samuel 7:6, Joel 2:12-15, Jonah 3:5). Fasting was practiced at a time of national crisis (Esther 4:16, 2 Chronicles 20:3). Fasting was practiced at the death or impending death of an important person (1 Samuel 31:13, 2 Samuel 12:16). Fasting was practiced when seeking God for special guidance (Ezra 8:21, Acts 10:30).

Jesus fasted for nearly six weeks to show us that a relationship with God is more important than food (Matthew 4:1-4). Jesus also recommended fasting as a private spiritual discipline, not an activity to be paraded before others as some act of superior spiritual discipline (Matthew 6:17-18). Fasting can be an important aspect of physical healing (Mark 9:29). Fasting was part of the process of selecting church leaders (Acts 13:2, Acts 14:23).

Fasting is a practical approach to help curb the current global epidemic of obesity. In addition to chronically restricting calories, adding a couple of days of fasting each week can keep those pounds coming off. Weight loss, aided by fasting, can reduce blood pressure, improve cholesterol levels, and reduce the risk of a heart attack, diabetes, and stroke.

One of the newly discovered benefits of fasting involves the immune system. In a recently published experimental study of laboratory animals it was found that fasting for several days at a time, in repeated cycles, has a profoundly positive effect on blood cells and the immune system.<sup>1</sup>

After the first couple of days of fasting, the body shifts gears into a body preservation mode. The body slows down most organ systems. The hair stops growing, and many hormone systems are altered. With prolonged fasting women can stop having periods. Fasting lowers thyroid hormone levels, slowing the metabolism of the whole body. Your bone marrow slows down red cell production and a mild anemia develops. White blood cell levels fall in the blood stream. Various self-renewing stem cells go quiet. But, this is not all bad for you.

After 3-5 days of fasting, when eating is resumed, a dramatic recovery takes place. Everything not only goes back to normal but comes back better than before. Most surprising is the dramatic increase in production of new cells from reawakened stem cells in the bone marrow. The blood stream is flooded with new red cells and many kinds of white cells. These new cells are better



and stronger than the old strains of immune cells you previously had. The effects of aging on the immune system are reversed.

Fasting is a discipline that needs to be rediscovered. The Bible recommends fasting under many different circumstances. The obesity epidemic would be blunted by fasting. Health is greatly enhanced by fasting. Fasting and prayer can prepare you to receive necessary direction from God so you will know how to live your life from day to day.

Ellen White, recommended fasting as an element necessary to fully receive the wisdom of God. She said: "Now and onward till the close of time the people of God should be more earnest, more wide-awake, not trusting in their own wisdom, but in the wisdom of their Leader. They should set aside days for fasting and prayer. *Counsels on Diet and Foods 188*

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<sup>1</sup> C. Chia-Wei et.al., "Prolonged Fasting Reduces IGF-1/PKA to Promote Hematopoietic-Stem-Cell-Based Regeneration and Reverse Immunosuppression," June 5, 2014, *Cell Stem Cell* 14, 810–823.

