

## Is Eating on the Clock Worth the Time?

It seems every year there is a diet du jour: low carb, low fat, liquid only – you name it, and people have tried it to drop pounds quickly. In the past few years intermittent fasting, sometimes called time restricted eating, has grown in popularity, often touted as a way to lose weight and gain control of one's diet.

But is eating on the clock worth the time? A recent study published in [The New England Journal of Medicine](#) says maybe not.

Intermittent fasting involves going with no (or very low) calories for various periods of time. Researchers followed study participants who were on a calorie restricted diet. Half of the study subjects also participated in time restricted intermittent fasting, in which a dieter eats the day's calories in a period of eight hours and fasts the remaining 16.

While both groups lost weight, there was no significant difference in weight loss between the group only practicing a calorie restricted diet and those who added time restrictions to their diet regimen.

Jessica Manginelli, an OSF HealthCare dietetic intern, says the findings are no surprise to her.

"Calories are calories, and it doesn't really matter what time of day that you're having those," Manginelli explains. "I think what's more important is the quality of the calories and making sure that you are eating in a way that feels good for you, and not trying to follow any arbitrary rules of, 'Oh, I can't eat past 8pm, or maybe I should skip breakfast so I can have things later in the day.' I think trying to follow all of those fad diet kind of rules makes eating so much more complicated. And it doesn't need to be that way."

While Manginelli admits that participating in intermittent fasting has helped many people lose weight, she says it can be hard to maintain.

In fact, an earlier study published in [JAMA Internal Medicine](#) found intermittent fasters may have a hard time adhering to their diets, and are more likely to drop out than someone on a daily calorie restriction only. According to Manginelli, no matter how quickly someone sees results, the best bet is a diet that can go the distance.

"Sustainability is one of the most important and integral pieces of nutrition in general, and that is really where these fad diets miss the mark," she says. "So think about - what does my lifestyle look like? Does it look the same every single day? Does my Monday through Friday look the same, but my weekends are different? And if you're trying to follow something with such rigid rules, you aren't going to be able to live a life that's comfortable without having extra anxiety associated with food."

Weight loss isn't a one-size-fits all affair. Finding something that is healthy for your body and easy for you to maintain could be the key to a lifetime of healthy living. Manginelli suggests paying close attention to your body's natural hunger cues - the external or internal urges that create the desire to eat – and setting small achievable goals to start.

"Whether it is adding a little bit more water, or adding a little bit more vegetables, these small changes really add up and they help you feel successful, so that you're not just constantly frustrated. They help you feel like you actually are making progress instead of doing 10 changes at once for a week and then not feeling like you can actually keep it up," Manginelli says.

Before you start any weight loss plan, Manginelli suggests speaking with your primary care physician. You can come up with a plan together, or you can ask for a referral to a dietitian. If you don't have a primary care physician you can find one at [osfhealthcare.org](http://osfhealthcare.org).