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Fasting: A greatest natural therapy

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Abstract

Fasting is the single greatest natural healing therapy. It is nature's ancient, universal "remedy" for many problems. Paramahansa Yogananda suggested that fasting is a way to increase our natural resistance to disease, stating that "Fasting is a natural method of healing". Most disease can be cured by judicious fasting unless one has a weak heart; regular short fasts have been recommended by the yogis an excellent health measure. Through fasting we can turn our energies inward, where we can use them for healing, clarity and change.

In India, a large number of women observed fast as a social cause, following certain customs and religious beliefs. Studies have proved that religion makes an important on health. Older adults particularly women who attend religious services at least once a week appear to have survival advantage over those attending services less frequently.

The study was conducted in Kanpur city. Questionnaire-cum- interview method was use for data collection. 100 subjects were taken for study in which 50% were non fasting women. The study found that fasting women have less medical problem than non-fasting women. The paper concludes that there is a need to more study on fasting and its impact on health status.

Keywords: Nutritional status, medical status, dietary pattern and intake

1. Introduction

Fast is derived from the anglo-saxon word 'feast' which means "firm" or "fixed". The practice of going without food at certain times was called fasting from anglo-saxon, fasten, to hold oneself from food, like most English word, the word fasting has more than one meaning. Thus, the dictionary defines fasting as "abstinence from food, partial or total, or from prescribed kind of foods". In most religious fasts abstinence from prescribed foods is all that is meant. We may define it thus, "Fasting is abstention, entirely or in part and for longer or shorter periods of time, from food & drink or from food alone".

Fasting is a time-proven remedy. Its use goes back many thousands of years, really to the beginning of life forms. As a healing process and a spiritual- religious process, it has continued to be more intelligently applied in different ways and for different purpose.

In other words, fasting is a multidimensional experience, physiologically, refraining from eating minimizes the work done by digestive organs, including the stomach, intestine, pancreas, gallbladder and liver. Most important here is that our liver, our body's large production and metabolic factor, can spend more time during fasting clearing up and creating its many new substances for our use. Breakdown of stored or circulating chemicals is the basic process of detoxification. The blood and lymphs also have the opportunity to clear of toxin as all the eliminative functions are enhanced with fasting. Each cell has the opportunity to catch up on its work, with fewer new demands, it can repair itself and dump its waste for the garbage pickup. Most fasters also experience a new vibrancy of their skin and clarity of mind and body. The objective of the study was, to assess the nutritional intake of fasting and non-fasting women and know the medical and health problems associated with fasting.

2. Methodology

The study was conducted in different areas of Kanpur. 100 subjects were taken for study in which 50% were fasting women and 50% were non-fasting women. The samples were randomly selected for analysis. Questionnaire –cum-interview methods was used for data collection statistical tool i.e. percentage, arithmetic mean, standard deviation, correlation coefficient and 't' test were used for statically analysis.

The study was restricted to Kanpur city. The age of women is above 20 years.

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3. Result and Discussion

Table: Relation between nutrient intake of fasting and non-fasting women

Nutrients	Non-fasting women Mean	Fasting women Mean	Value of 't'
Energy(kcal/d)	1725	1656	1.100
Protein(gm/d)	57.9	56.1	0.876
Fat(gm/d)	21.0	20.1	0.709
Vitamin A(mg/d)	1216.8	1154.6	0.601
Vitamin C(mg/d)	63.8	64.0	-0.102
Vitamin B12(mg/d)	0.32	0.34	0.376
Folic acid (mg/d)	59.4	47.4	4.134
Thiamine(mg/d)	1.44	1.5	-1.961

Average intake of different nutrients such as energy was 1725 kcal, protein 57.9 gm, fat 21 gm, beta-carotene 1216.8 mg, vitamin C 63.8 mg, vitamin B12 0.32 mg, folic acid 59.4 mg and thiamine was found 1.44 in non-fasting group whereas in fasting group energy was 1656 kcal, protein 56.1 gm, fat 20.1

gm, beta-carotene 1154.6 mg, vitamin C 64 mg, vitamin B12 0.34 mg, folic acid 47.4 mg and thiamine was 1.5 mg which shows that intake of nutrients were almost similar in both group.

Table: Distribution of respondent on the basis of medical problem.

Medical Problems	Non fasting women		Fasting women	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	%
Sweating, confusion	2	4.0	1	2.0
Headache	20	40.0	10	20.0
Headache Diabetes	5	10.0	3	6.0
Headache, Gastric Problem	2	4.0	4	8.0
Headache Anxiety	2	4.0	6	12.0
Headache, B.P.	2	4.0	2	4.0
None	6	12.0	3	6.0
B.P., Weakness	8	16.0	16	32.0
Anxiety constipation	3	6.0	4	8.0
Asthama	-	-	1	2.0

On comparing the medical status among fasting and non-fasting women it was found that in non-fasting group 40% were having headache problem, 12% having B.P. and weakness, 10% were having headache and diabetes problem and 16% were having not any problem whereas in fasting group 20% were headache problem, 32% were having not any problem. Table shows that fasting women have less medical problem than non-fasting women. This shows that fasting women were found better in their medical status as compare to non-fasting women because digest food takes tremendous amount of blood and energy to fill the muscles and tissue of our digestive system. When we stop eating, our digestive system rests and all that blood and energy can be put somewhere else to heal us. Fasting is a good means to obtain good health.

4. Conclusion

Fasting as the royal road to health and long life. Fasting is a popular method of detoxification because the body can begin extricating the noxious material rather quickly, allowing the purification of the blood and for the body to commence the healing process. Literally fasting means to deprive oneself of food for a specific period, usually for therapeutic or religious purposes. Medical journals have presented articles that support fasting as a therapeutic means of ridding hazardous material from the body. There is a need to encourage and educate the community to adopt and continue useful practice and modify some to minimize disadvantage of fasting.

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