

THE IMPORTANCE OF FAST FOR A MODERN INDIVIDUAL

Tatiana KIMÁKOVÁ, Petr KACHLÍK

Abstract: *Term beneficial starvation or fasting is not used in the expert or popular literature very frequently. Even many doctors and other medically educated professionals don't comment on the issue very often. Fast or a long-term starvation, perceived as a voluntary rejection of any meals, even the juices is one of the most important, but at the same time currently the least accepted way of retaining and restoring health. Fast is recommended and practiced by all widely spread religions, such as Christianity, Islam and Buddhism. Starvation was practiced and used to treat patients, by various influential physicians or personages of scientific field in the past. We can refer to, for example, Hippocrates, the founder of a rational and dynamic medicine, dubbed "the father of medicine", Abú Alí al-Husayn ibn Abdalláh ibn Sína (Avicenna), Pythagorus, Socrates, Plato, then the founder of a rational hygiene Christoph Wilhelm Hufeland, or an American writer and the Pulitzer prize laureate Upton Beall Sinclair. Contemporary western medicine has lost the idea of fasting, because in its opinion it only observes purely religious purposes of a soul absolution, but doesn't deliver any benefits to the body. The facts, however, prove this idea wrong. In the published writings, we can even find the cases, in which some fatal diseases were cured by the means of fast. It is up to the contemporary medicine itself to rediscover the beneficial influence of fast on human organism and to begin seriously setting up a research of relevancy of its indications regarding various diseases.*

Keywords: *starvation, the famous people of medicine*

Introduction

It is necessary to discern between the recovery fasting and the so called hunger-strike, directly at the beginning, latter being a way of a nonviolent protest against reality, decision of a higher authority or a way of enforcing one's wishes. Political hunger-strike was probably used for the first time by Móhandás Karamčand Gándhí. It is also important to notice the difference between the forced and voluntary fasting. Forced starvation, caused by natural disasters, wars, poor crops or other catastrophes is linked with unimaginable suffering. It is a cause of multiple serious chronic diseases and death.

In our commentary, we are addressing a voluntary, health-recovering fasting.

One of the most important but at the same time the least comprehended ways of preservation and restoration of health is voluntary starving called a fast. Recovery fasting is a topic which is not mentioned, in the expert or professional publications very often. Quite the contrary. Even the numerous medically educated professionals don't discuss the topic very often, actually hardly ever.

The Hunger-Strike

Long-term fasting, a hunger-strike, is one of the most important, but currently the least understood method of preserving and restoring health.

The fast, limited diet and food consumption and a spiritual purification at the same time, stemming from the self-denial, is recommended by all major religions: Christianity, Islam and Buddhism.

In the case of a healthy diet it is possible to talk about certain link with a fast, although the fast is a privileged practice of expressing the religious faith in attempt to reach the God or a deity. A bodily fast, or a purifying therapy, is a way of a voluntary self-denial and is effective in cleaning human's mind and body. A fast, perceived this way does not have much in common with today's trends of slimming diets, the goal of which is a "slender body".

Famous historic personalities and a hunger-strike

Historically, the most famous personality, with his 40-day fast, was Jesus Christ (Holy Bible, 1996). In the factual literature on the history of medicine, we are likely to learn about many famous persons, healers and physicians who identified with the idea of fasting, relating to the treatment of various illnesses and applied it successfully not only on their patients but also on themselves.

The Egyptians in the 15th century BC assumed, according to the archives of Herod that the basis of health and the preservation of youth, is a systematic fast (three days a month) and a stomach purification by means of nauseating medicines and enema. "The Egyptians", wrote Herod, "are the healthiest of all mortals."

In the Ancient Greece Pythagorus himself fasted for forty days. He was convinced that he was increasing his mental cognition this way. He even forced his pupils to starve. This opinion was common among other Greek philosophers **Socrates** and **Plato**. Both of them systematically observed a ten day fast, which in their opinion, contributed to an attainment of a higher level of cognitive acumen.

The link between diet and illness was well known by one of the most famous physician of Antiquity, Hippocrates (5th century BC), who recommended a fast at the beginning of disease.

Hippocrates, the founder of rational and dynamic medicine, called "the father of medicine", used to say that the increase of food consumption is necessary only rarely. It is often more useful to dispose of the meals completely. If the illness doesn't reach its climax the patient will sustain it.

A man carries a doctor in himself. It is necessary to assist him with his job. If the body is not purified and we will nourish it further, we will harm it. If the patient is fed

abundantly, his illness is nourished as well. Each excess is against the nature. Asclepius had a similar opinion, what's more, on top of the fast he also subscribed spa therapy, exercise and balms to his patients (Nikolajev a Nilov, 1996; Junas a Bokesová-Uherova; 1985).

During Napoleon's occupation of Egypt there were recorded many cases in which syphilis inflicted patients in Arabic hospitals, were cured by means of a hunger-strike.

A hunger-strike pioneer was **Dr. Heinrich Tanier** who fasted twice for forty days, to prove, that man can easily survive without food for a long time, with no damage to his body.

The founder of a Cistercian order, **Robert Molem**, decided after the death of a friend to end his life by starving. He retired to his friends' place in the mountains, stopped to eat and waited for death. After seventy days he concluded that the fate didn't wish his death. He started to eat and lived to an old age. An American writer **Upton Beall Sinclair (1878-1968)**, laureate of Pulitzer price, the prestigious American journalistic and artistic award, also identified with a positive affect of starving. He treated his health problems with a twelve day fast (Upton Sinclair; Nikolajev a Nilov, 1996).

Definition of a hunger-strike

It is a voluntary refusal of any kind of food, including the juices. Drinking of water, mineral or distilled is necessary. Voluntary starving has a positive impact on human organism. It can work preventively or directly for treating various diseases. For someone who is determined to practice a hunger-strike, it is important to do a research on the topic in advance, either by studying the appropriate literature or consulting with someone who has practiced the hunger-strike themselves. It is the most appropriate, obviously, to consult with a medical professional - a physician, a nutritionist, or another specialist, most conveniently with someone who has their own personal experience with it (Cingoš, 1998).

Hunger-strike is not a method to lose weight. Fasting is a vehicle of physical and mental purification and a way of treating chronic and cancerous diseases. During the starvation, the organism does not replenish energetic outputs and is forced to exist merely on its internal reserves. Throughout the process of fast, an increased physiological regeneration, renewal and replenishment of the cells and stabilization of molecular and chemical systems of an organism take place. Furthermore, during the starvation, a decomposition of useless and harmful substances - phlegm and residues of different kinds, happens. The ultimate result of a fast is, a purification and a normalization of a body microflora and defensive functions of an organism and an improvement of the metabolism and the absorbent abilities of a body which can even lead to its rejuvenation (Partyková, 2006).

Length of a fast

A man can survive without food for a handful of weeks, forty days at the most. There are known some extreme cases when people fasted for even more than sixty days. However, for the safety of a patient it is recommended that a voluntary, recovery fast

should not last longer than forty days. After crossing this limit, some irreversible changes might happen to the organism, causing even death. Fast can also be short-term (up to seven days), mid-term (seven to fourteen days) and long-term (maximum up to forty days). Even a one day fast (once a week) is beneficial for the body.

The effects of a fast on the body

Hunger is one of the oldest and most practical phenomena in human's life and its use as a method of healing is as old as the humankind itself. Although healing by hunger is not typical only for man. Animals, lead by an instinct, use hunger as a healing method. Sick dog, cats and horses stop to consume nutrition (Horáková, 2008; Cingoš, 1998).

It is possible to compare human organism to an oxygen burning device. The amount of fuel equivalent to approximately half a kilogram of fat is burnt in it over twenty-four hours. As soon as we stop the intake of fuel, the body immediately changes its way of supplying. The fuel is administered from internal reserves. The nutrients that are least needed such as excessive tissue, various lumps, adhesions that only restrict the body's functioning, are burnt first. That is why in many cases a long-term starvation leads to curing cancerous tumors.

It is known that under the influence of a fast the organism is disposing of useless particles. During the fast we burn approximately half a kilogram of tissue, harmful substances, fat, tumors, phlegm and other needless matter, what's more, we even save a huge amount of energy that is necessary for digestion. The body has to rid itself of all waste and extra food. Heart, bowels, liver, spleen, skin and various glands work diligently. All of these organs participate in the process of using the nutrition. (Horáková, 2008; Cingoš, 1998; Nikolajev a Nilov, 1996). The increase in the number of red blood cells occurs during starvation. The 100% increment of hemoglobin happened after a twelve day fast. The quality of blood improved as well. A decrease in the muscle volume occurs throughout a long-term fast. The loss of fat and muscle is not a threat to the body. A short-term fast does not decrease the number of muscle cells. The blood circulation improves as well. The organism is compelled to use the proteins scattered over the arteries, which has a rejuvenating effect on the organism and boosts the calcium-riddance of the arteries and the increase of their passage.

After the completion of a hunger-strike the increase in the production of fluids with an increased digesting ability occurs. The abscesses are cured, the enormous appetite and uncomfortable feelings diminish. Hunger also cleanses the digestive system in the fastest and most natural manner.

The effective rejuvenation of skin is visible. Sharp lines and wrinkles subside. Blemishes, colorless spots and boils gradually disappear. The skin is taking on a finer tone and the tissue structure is improving.

Hunger-strike improves the physical and mental condition of an individual. Literature even describes cases, particularly, of depressive and fear-stricken patients on whom starvation had very beneficial effects. Hunger positively affects all senses. The sight becomes sharper. Cases in which the cataract completely disappeared during the fast were chronicled. Many cases of deafness disappearance occurred as well. Maybe it's caused by the fact that Eustachian tube which links the inner ear with the nasal

area, is disposing of the filth and cataract residue(Cingoš, 1998; Nikolajev a Nilov, 1996).

Drinking and hygiene during the fast

It is recommended to drink as needed, preferably clean water. The intake of milk, fruit or vegetable juices is not advised during the fast. Milk is a food (babies). Fruit and vegetable juices belong to a special diet, which starts the starvation.

It is necessary to be increasingly hygienic over the fast. It is required to shower often, brush the teeth, wash the tongue (with an edge of a flipped coffee-spoon), walk in the fresh air and sleep long enough.

Body organs during the starvation

If the organism has nothing to digest, it will start to consume its own organs. This is exactly where the important facts emerge. The consumption of the reserves in various organs is unequal. The slightest losses are in the nerve centers and heart (Nikolajev a Nilov, 1996).

The most important facts concerning the fast

Starvation or fast is not merely a religious matter, it works to prevent various diseases and can even cure them.

It has a rejuvenating effect.

It is necessary to consult a physician before the first hunger-strike, preferably such who has their personal experience with it.

Do a research, using appropriate resources.

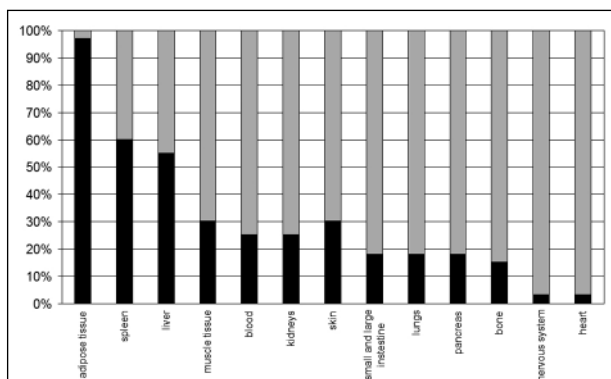
Not to worry! A voluntary decision to fast is important.

It is recommended to practice fast during a weekend or holiday, when one has enough time to purify their body, enough sleep, and exercise in the fresh air.

Keep your feet warm! The risk of getting a cold.

Remember! How many days to fast and how many days lasts the reverse phase.

During the reverse phase the salt mustn't be added to the meals. To consume meat, meat products, mushrooms and eggs is forbidden. Alcohol and smoking is restricted. The violation of these rules is dangerous for the body (Horáková, 2008; Cingoš, 1998; Nikolajev a Nilov, 1996).



The weight loss of specific organs and tissues in percentage

Who can't fast:

- breast-feeding mothers,
- patients with following conditions - lung tuberculosis, Basedow disease, adinism, disorders of central nerve system, acute conditions that require a surgical treatment - acute appendix, entanglement of bowels, cysts, abnormalities of inner organs, high level of exhaustion especially in the elders,
- HIV positive patients (Nikolajev a Nilov, 1996).

Conclusion

It is up to the contemporary medicine itself to rediscover the beneficial influence of fast on human organism and to seriously begin establishing the research of relevancy of its indications in relation to various diseases. Besides the improvement of physical fitness and health it also brings an unexpected rush of energy and optimism. It can restore lost health. Patience and inner strength are highly recommended during the fast. The feeling that we have done something good for our health is worth it.

VÝZNAM PÔSTU PRE MODERNÉHO ČLOVEKA

Abstrakt: Pojem ozdravná hladovka alebo pôst sa v odbornej a populárnej literatúre nepoužíva príliš často. Dokonca mnohí lekári a iní medicínsky vzdelaní odborníci sa k tejto problematike vyjadrujú zriedkakedy alebo vôbec nie. Pôst alebo dlhodobé hladovanie je ako dobrovoľné odmietnutie akejkoľvek stravy, teda i štiav jedným z najdôležitejších, ale súčasne najmenej chápaných spôsobov uchovania a obnovy zdravia. Pôst doporučujú a praktizujú všetky veľké náboženstvá: kresťanstvo, islam i budhizmus. Hladovku sami praktizovali a ňou i svojich pacientov liečili mnohí významní liečitelia či osobnosti vedeckého života v minulosti. Môžeme spomenúť napríklad Hippokrata, zakladateľa racionálneho a dynamického lekárstva, nazývaného „otec medicíny“, Abú Alí al-Husayn ibn Abdalláh ibn Sína (Avicenna), Pythagora, Sokratesa, Platóna, ďalej

zakladateľa racionálnej hygieny Christopa Wilhelma Hufelanda, či amerického spisovateľa, nositeľa Pulitzerovej ceny Upton Beall Sinclair. Súčasná západná lekárska veda stratila pôst, pretože podľa nej sleduje čiste náboženské účely očisty duše, ale neprináša žiadny úžitok telu. Fakty však dokazujú opak. V literatúre nájdeme opísané prípady, kedy sa pôstom vyliečili i niektoré nevyliečiteľné ochorenia. Je na samotnej súčasnej medicíne, aby opäť objavila blahodárny vplyv hladovky na organizmus človeka a začala sa seriózne zaoberať výskumom vhodnosti jej indikácie pri rôznych ochoreniach.

Kľúčové slová: pôst, slávne osobnosti medicíny