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Megan [00:00:06] Hi, everyone, it's Megan Ramos, and I'm here today with my wonderful co-host, Dr. Nadia Pateguana. Nadia, how are you doing today?

Nadia [00:00:14] Doing great Megan how about you?

Megan [00:00:16] Good. I'm really excited. Christmas is just around the corner. How are you guys doing over there in Portugal getting ready for the holiday festivities?

Nadia [00:00:25] Well, remember that this year we got to come to Canada.

[00:00:28] Oh, that's right. I'm not in Canada this year, so...

Nadia [00:00:33] That's right. We just keep missing each other.

Megan [00:00:36] I was just there briefly the other month, but this is my first Christmas in quite some time not being home in Toronto. Well, you're going to have a cold one this year, but hopefully a wonderful one with your family.

Nadia [00:00:50] Yay. I love Christmas in Canada.

Megan [00:00:52] It's awesome. Well, in today's episode, we're going to answer your questions. And today, we were lucky to get questions that are some of the most commonly asked questions around this particular time of the year. So we're going to jump right into it with question number one. So Nadia, I'm going to throw this one over to you.

[00:01:14] Question is: Is it true that you shouldn't eat sugar and fat at the same time? Is it bad for you?

Nadia [00:01:22] OK, so like everything in life, right? There's always two sides to the coin. I'm going to, if you don't mind Megan, I'm going to answer part of it, and then I'm going to throw the other part at you just so people can hear both sides, all right?

[00:01:36] So. I think why this question tends to be confusing to some people is because they often hear within our program that we talk about the insulin response to sugar and to more processed foods, and how it's always a good idea to eat a bit more fat and a little bit of fiber and a little bit of vinegar to mitigate that insulin response. So I think that that's where the confusion comes from, don't you think, Megan? I think because like when I share my food pyramid with people; at the base of the food pyramid, I've got the foods that are a little bit higher in fat and I've got a bit of fiber. And I know you and Angel, I think it was Angel, a while back did a fun video where he put vinegar on french fries and then tested. Was it his ketones or blood sugars? I don't remember.

Megan [00:02:25] Blood sugar levels.

Nadia [00:02:27] Right. So I think people hear, you know, that fat, if you eat it with carbs, that it mitigates the insulin response, meaning you won't have such a high insulin spike. And so that's why people might think, "Well, are you supposed to eat fat with sugar?" And

so that's my take on it, but I know it's not great to do this all the time. What do you think, Megan?

Megan [00:02:46] It isn't great to do it all of the time. So one of the reasons why this comes up so much over the holidays is because people are planning on indulging a bit, but they want to minimize the impact that the holiday foods or the festive foods, quote-unquote, have on their insulin levels. Dr. Jason Fung talked in his book - The Obesity Code - about those protective factors. Us at The Fasting Method, in our Community, with our coaching clients - we talk about these protective factors: fat, fiber, and vinegar.

[00:03:18] But the fat concept can be really, really confusing, as you're saying. So just imagine sort of a traditional breakfast plate where it's like half home fries and like half bacon, right? When you're eating so many home fries, that's a ton of starch. So your blood sugar is just going to go through the roof, you're going to have a huge, huge insulin surge. And that insulin, it grabs on to that fat and it just sucks it into your fat cells. So when you're eating just like a lot of glucose and you're going to have this big insulin surge, eating it with fat can not be the most beneficial thing. But if you're having a little bit of sugar, a little bit of something starchy, then adding quite a lot of fat to it can be protective. So it's one of those things where it's not necessarily this black-or-white rule when it comes to fat being a protective factor. If there's just so much carbs being consumed, a lot of that fat is going to end up being trapped in your fat cells. But if you're just having like a little bit, like a couple of little tiny potatoes, and you want to put butter on them, then that can actually be protective at preventing such a rapid digestion of those potatoes, blunting the glucose response and insulin response. So the fat ones, kinda, can be really tricky for people to navigate.

[00:04:46] So during the holiday time of year, I say, hey, you know, if you are uncertain on how to navigate the fat protective factor, that's OK, because that's just one of three. So there's also vinegar and there's fiber. So if you're more comfortable with those, then use those.

[00:05:03] So you were just mentioning my husband sort of showing the before-and-after consequences of having, quote-unquote, naked potatoes versus potatoes that were dressed in vinegar. And the glucose response is substantially less if you cover them with vinegar. So the vinegar is not going to get stuffed in the fat cells or anything like that. So if you're at your holiday feast and you're really not quite sure how to minimize it, you're scared to take that fat because you're not sure if you're taking a lot of carb or a lot of starch or sugar, then use the vinegar or just use the fiber. If you're someone who does eat fiber in your diet, use that to make sure you're getting in plenty of leafy greens and non-starchy vegetables.

[00:05:52] Now, with vinegar, there's different ways you can consume it. And one of the reasons why I love vinegar as a protective factor is because everybody has vinegar. And when we say vinegar is a protective factor, we mean all of the vinegars: red wine vinegar, apple cider vinegar, malt vinegar, white vinegar, balsamic vinegar. You name it, if it's vinegar, it's a protective factor.

[00:06:15] So wherever we go, someone has a bottle of vinegar. Come to our house, we've got like ten different types of vinegar! So you can always ask someone. It's an easy condiment. It is not a weird condiment to ask for, either. If you're at your sister-in-law's or

your mother's house, it's not strange to ask for some balsamic vinegar. And you can put that on anything that's appropriate. You can put it on your starch, or you can even put it on your fibrous vegetables. Heck, you can even sort of drizzle it on top of meat to give it added flavor. I love putting balsamic vinegar on my Brussels sprouts; I think that's a fantastic way of doing it.

[00:06:54] Or sometimes people add apple cider vinegar to a glass of water and just do a sort of a shot of that before a holiday meal. I work with individuals who will just bring a little bottle of it with them and then just add it into their water inconspicuously before their holiday meal. So that's a really good one.

[00:07:13] And then with the fiber, just filling up on the fiber first. So, you know, if you're someone like me who's going to totally indulge in Brussels sprouts, going for the Brussels sprouts on your plate first before consuming any starch or carb that you might be allowing yourself to have that day.

Nadia [00:07:31] That's an awesome tip, especially for diabetics. And I know a lot of people in our community use vinegar, just as you described. And it's funny because this particular question - the fat and sugar together - I've been asked this so many times, and I was super curious to hear your take on it. So thank you.

Megan [00:07:49] It's a funny one. It's really sort of difficult to explain because if you think of it in general, it really just matters the amount of what we're eating of what, and it can sometimes be helpful or it can sometimes be harmful. And like so many things, it's not black or white, or right or wrong. It's really the dosage makes the poison.

Nadia [00:08:11] I was just about to say that!

Megan [00:08:15] We've worked together for a very long time.

Nadia [00:08:17] Too long maybe!

Megan [00:08:21] OK, the next question is one I don't think you or I have that much personal experience with. Well, maybe that's not super true on my side of things! Alcohol during the holiday - should you, shouldn't you? If you're going to, what you should do about it.

[00:08:42] I don't think anyone at The Fasting Method team would consider themselves to be much of a wine connoisseur, although I did try. When I met my husband, he was living in Silicon Valley and we would often go to Napa and Sonoma. And I did try for a few years to become a wine connoisseur, but it just wasn't serving me - sleep, mood, energy - and I ended up just cutting it out.

[00:09:09] But during that period of time, there were a few strategies that I implemented during holiday periods. Always try to find lower-sugar wines, if you're going to have wine. If you're in places like Canada, every province has a different system that regulates the sale of alcohol, but most of these different agencies do require that sugar is on the label somewhere. We're both originally from Ontario - Toronto, Ontario - and that's regulated by the LCBO. And on the price tags at the stores, there you can see the sugar content. And the LCBO has a great app that you can download. And I've even, I downloaded it and I used it even when I'd come to California to visit my husband before we were married

because we would be in sort of a wine store, a liquor store, and a bottle would look good, and I'd go into the LCBO app and I would enter the name of the wine and then I could see the sugar content. If sugar content is just not something that's going to be plainly listed there, you want to look for dry or extra dry wine as your option and then, if you're having white or rosé wine, it doesn't kill to add a couple of ice cubes to water it down a little bit to make sure that you're getting hydrated. And if that totally repulses you - I'm sorry for our wine aficionados out there - just having a glass of water (or two) in between glasses of wine. So that's for all of the wine: red, white, rosé, getting in that water in between. So for me, I always had a rule of thumb; I would have two or three glasses of water in between any glass of wine that I had during the holidays.

[00:11:00] Spirits. Spirits in general are OK. Things like vodka and gin are especially preferred amongst the lower-carb or ketogenic communities, or paleo community. You just need to be cautious, conscientious of what you're using as mixers. So you don't want to be using sugary beverages, or ones with a lot of sweeteners, really stick to seltzer water or carbonated water, mineral water and then add some natural like lime juice to give it a kick.

[00:11:35] A word of caution about tonic water; most people don't actually realize that tonic water is just full of sugar. They see water in the name. There's nothing about the word tonic that makes you think of sweetness or sugar. And then we're sort of used to drinks usually being sweet. I don't think people make the connection that the sweetness is actually coming from the tonic water. So you want to kick that to the curb, you want to add in that seltzer water. And the same rule goes if you're having a glass of whiskey or you're having sort of a gin with some seltzer water, or vodka and some seltzer water, you know, have a couple (two or three glasses) of plain water - could still be carbonated, could still be seltzer water, but just plain water - in between your beverages. Anything else you can think of Nadia on the festive beverage side of things?

Nadia [00:12:29] I do have some thoughts, and I'm actually wondering what you think about this too. Those are great tips. Of course, you and I are not great drinkers. I'm not a big drinker at all. And even if I try to join in with my husband with a glass of wine, I don't, I definitely don't finish half. And the reason is just because, I think as a younger person, like you said, all I wanted was those sweet drinks. So, and those we got to stay away from, for sure.

[00:12:55] So the water tip is huge because, of course, alcohol, on top of it all, is a diuretic. So you want to replace that water and you really will need that, especially if you're doing what we're doing, right? Our intermittent fasting and lower-carb diet, you want to make sure you're well-hydrated at all times.

[00:13:11] But my only tip that I think I want to add in, because I think you said at all, is that I really counsel my clients in our Community to have those drinks (and this should be common sense), but have those drinks within your TRE windows, within, you know, close to your mealtime for a number of reasons, right? You're going to feel a lot more drunk if you're fasting and you drink than what you might be used to. Keeping in mind that there's always going to be an insulin response to alcohol, and really anything, right? So you want to sort of bring that into the eating window where you're already having an insulin response. If you're looking at ketones, you know, you just, these are the things that, if you want to have best results and best-case scenario, if you're going to have alcohol, it for sure should be within your meals. Do you tell this to people too, Megan?

Megan [00:14:08] Yeah, it's absolutely great advice. So what we coach a lot of our Fasting Method Community and coaching clients on the holidays is we don't want them showing up to holiday parties and grazing for hours. This will do you in, even if you're on the most strict ketogenic diet. I did this. I remember I had one holiday - I was staying with my mother for four or five days and, you know, we would eat from the time we woke up to the time we went to bed. And I just remember being so proud that I stayed perfectly keto; I was doing a strict ketogenic diet at that time in that part of my journey. I was so proud and I gained four pounds! So that chronic snacking, regardless, is going to cause insulin secretion, and it adds up at the end of the day. So, you know, it's important to remember we don't just develop insulin resistance, type 2 diabetes, obesity, metabolic syndrome from eating sugary or starchy foods that cause large spikes in insulin; we also develop it from the chronic stimulus of even low levels of insulin. And it all adds up.

[00:15:13] So what we spend a lot of time coaching people on is having these windows. So I encourage people - nowadays, especially with technology, you've got your smartwatches, your smartphones - when you show up at a holiday party, set a timer for 90 minutes and enjoy. Enjoy the meat, the cheese, the vegetables, whatever you're going to enjoy, but you cap it at 90 minutes. So you're not there trying to like awkwardly fast. You're not there trying to resist all of the food that's screaming at you. You're not having these weird, awkward interactions with your friends and family because they're uncomfortable, because you're not eating. And it's necessarily that I think we should put a lot of weight on that, but it gives you time to eat safely, responsibly and socially. So we encourage people, you know, to have this one 90 minute window where you enjoy appetizers and hors d'oeuvres. And if you're going to have a festive beverage, have it in that 90 minutes. And then when you get the quiet beep on your phone, or the buzz on your watch, then you stop and then you wait until the holiday meal. So you get to have a bit of everything but in a controlled manner. And then you can have your next festive beverage with your holiday meal. And then just drinking water in between.

Nadia [00:16:34] That's exactly it. And a word of caution, you know, eat the food first and then start with the beverage, not the beverage first and then the food!

Megan [00:16:42] And electrolytes. I do know that the Keto Chow Fasting Drops - this is not an ad, not an ad at all - but that has saved some of our Community members from feeling really yucky the next morning after some very holly jolly parties!

Nadia [00:17:01] Actually, that's a great point, is the fact that you're going to have, sort of, that hangover feeling, hungover feeling, is a lot worse, of course, if you're not properly hydrated and if you've had unfortunately too much alcohol without enough water, like Megan talked about. And also the drinking without eating; it's all really connected. But in most cultures, right, all over the world, especially the heavy, the heavy wine drinking cultures, they only drink wine with their meals and there's usually a glass of water right next to it. So we should just follow what these people do.

Megan [00:17:36] Thanks, Nadia. All right, the next one. I know you're feeling a little under the weather today and I'm certain people are going to ask you in your health consultations today in your Community groups, "Are you fasting?".

[00:17:51] This is a very common question at this time of the year: fasting and immunity - should you fast if you're feeling sick this holiday season?

Nadia [00:18:00] Hmm. The funny thing is, I am fasting, Megan! And we usually tell people that, you know, if you're on vacation, don't fast. If it's a holiday, don't fast. And if you're feeling sick, don't fast. But really, I think it's, again, it depends, right? I'm fasting because today's my fasting day. And actually, when you fast, you know, it lowers your inflammation, right? Your inflammatory markers go down.

[00:18:25] And so I've got a bit of a cold, probably some allergies or whatever it is, who knows? But inflammation is up when you've got a flu, or a cold, or whatever. And so fasting, and I know this from experience, actually lowers inflammation, and it actually helps you heal a little bit quicker. But I would not think that somebody, or somebody new to fasting, or trying to enforce fasting when you're not feeling well, or if you're fasting and for whatever reason, it doesn't matter what it is, you don't feel well, then you break your fast. That's not the case with me. I feel just fine; I just have a little bit of a cold. And if, you know, if I found it more challenging and sometimes that happens even to me, if I'm under the weather, the fast feels a lot harder because these counter-regulatory hormones go up, right? When you're a little bit more stressed - physically or emotionally. And then fasting just seems very difficult; you become very, very agitated. Or if I became dehydrated. I've got tons of water and teas and my salt next to me. If I became dehydrated, I wouldn't feel great and then I would have to break the fast. But that hasn't happened. And so it's Thursday, and I fast on Thursdays.

Megan [00:19:39] It's funny to hear this question. I just, when I was back in, I had to go to Montreal, and then I traveled to Toronto and I got food poisoning in Toronto. And jeez, I couldn't physically eat if I wanted to for about four or five days. But it was important, you know, at the time, because I was losing so much fluid, it was important to stay hydrated. So I definitely source out some broth and really got in some salt and felt well. But it's the same thing; usually, so many people just don't feel like eating when they're sick and we should never really force eating.

[00:20:15] Every now and then, someone that I work with, one of our Community members, or even myself, when feeling a little under the weather gets a really bizarre craving. A few years ago, I had a cold. I'd traveled so much - I'd been on like eight airplanes in the course of one week - and my time zone, my body clock, everything, I was not, my immunity was down. So I got sick and I had this bizarre craving for asparagus, which I loathe. Like, I loathe that under the most normal circumstances; it is not my vegetable of choice in any situation. And I had this just really crazy, bizarre craving for asparagus. And when you start to look at the nutrient profile of asparagus, it is higher in some things that I don't necessarily get a lot of my diet. And I was like, "This is really interesting. My body is clearly trying to source specific nutrients."

[00:21:14] And so every now and then, we'll be checking with a coaching client or a Community member and they're feeling a little under the weather. But they're having something, like bizarre craving for cabbage or something, like truly not, quote-unquote, comfort foods. And in those cases, I think it's kind of important to listen to your body to get those nutrients that we need. So you gotta go with the ebbs and flows with this.

[00:21:38] But in general, I had a family member in the hospital with some serious inflammation recently, and they fasted him. They fasted him for four days before they gave him liquids. He was allowed some water, but otherwise, it was sort of a straight fast. And he was on a saline drip too so it wasn't a dry fast, but that was the treatment at the hospital to lower the insulin levels down. For anyone who's had a bout of diverticulitis, like, they fast

you, like, that is treatment and you go to the hospital, they fast you for several days. So it's a very common practice, even in standard medicine. They just don't call it fasting. And this family member, he's actually involved in the fasting community in general, and he said to the doctor something about he was doing a fast. And they were like, "No, you're not doing a fast, we're bringing down your inflammation." He was just like, "OK, sure!"

Nadia [00:22:34] Well, that's exactly it. You just mentioned diverticulitis, right? It's a chronic inflammatory concern, and you can have an acute bout of it. And that's exactly it. That's exactly what people do. And so people that have diverticulitis know that if you fast, it brings down the inflammation. Again, we're not saying, you know, continue fasting if you don't feel well, that's a totally different thing. Like, I'm fully functional, I feel just great, I'm well hydrated. And I feel it, as soon as I'm dehydrated, I feel it; it's immediate. I either get nauseous or, you know, other symptoms of it, and I would break, and I would have no issues breaking my fast today if I needed.

[00:23:11] So today people are asking me, "Well, but how are you doing? But you have a, you know, don't you need cough drops, and don't you need honey in your tea?" and all of these other things. And that's a whole other conversation because, you know, as we're doing that, you're just raising your insulin throughout the day because these things have either sugars or sweeteners, you know? And honey, I wouldn't be completely against putting a little bit of honey here and there within a meal and a TRE window. But I don't want to be sipping on honey all day long. Really, this is just my own experience, because that's just going to raise my insulin. And what that does, of course, if you're diabetic, you would see that right away. And what that does is it just increases your inflammation, as we said, and it's going to make your healing take a little bit longer.

[00:23:55] So I'll tell you what I do. It's quite simple, actually. I gargle with warm water and salt - that really helps. And I've got a saline nose spray or, yesterday in my group, we talked about the neti pots. I mean, there's really great ways to just cleanse this out. I drink a ton of water and tea, like I said, just to keep my throat from getting dry and from coughing up a storm. But I'm actually doing fine, and it's probably because of the fast; it's actually made it a little bit easier. But again, any time you don't feel well and you need to break your fast, break your fast.

Megan [00:24:27] Yeah. One thing that I will do if I feel like I'm getting sick, I'll get some zinc lozenges from Life Extensions. Now again, everyone listening, this is not an ad, but most zinc lozenges have tons and tons of sugar in them. Recently, my husband went to grab a bottle at Sprouts, here in California, and I forget what brand it was, but there was like eight different types of sugar. It was ridiculous, and we had to get rid of them. But Life Extensions - they have different ones. They kind of have ones for the people that like sugar, but then they have ones for people in the paleo, low-carb, real-food community that aren't just full of, they do not taste pleasant to have, but the zinc's been helpful. So that's something that I've started doing in the last year to, as soon as I start to feel like, "Oh, my throat's a little bit itchy," or I'm feeling a little run down. It's something we'll keep on hand during this holiday season too, just because everybody's just being so extra cautious right now around flu season.

Nadia [00:25:34] Yeah.

Megan [00:25:35] All right. The next question is: diarrhea when breaking a fast. This is a common one. Now, if you're someone who is new to fasting, or you're getting back on

track with fasting, or you've recently adopted a more intensive fasting protocol, it's not uncommon to experience diarrhea when you break your fast. Also around the holiday season, when we're indulging in foods that perhaps we don't eat regularly, or we're having foods with sweeteners in them, like stevia, or sugar alcohols, like xylitol or erythritol, we might suddenly start to experience some gastric issues around the time that we fast. And first and foremost, I want to say I'm not telling you to not have any stevia, monk fruit, xylitol, erythritol, any of that this holiday season. Just be cautious about the dosage - and dosage, again, makes the poison - but even a little bit can make our digestive system a little wonky. So people tend to experience more loose stools this time of year when they're fasting and eating slightly differently than they do. We talk about how we eat, you know, between Thanksgiving and New Year's. And it's only like a month and a half of the year, but it's very different from how we eat between New Year's and Thanksgiving in the United States. Our diets are different, and that's OK.

[00:27:03] So usually once you go back to your regular diet, everyone, this will go away. And if you're new to fasting, or new to a different protocol, or getting back on track, after you've done a week or two of fasting, your digestive system, more or less, should sort itself out.

[00:27:18] So what can you do to try to prevent those loose stools? Well, you gotta sort of. I know it's difficult enough, everyone, to sort of plan your fasting around your holiday events but, if you're someone who's experiencing this side effect, always try to make it so that you are breaking your fast at home rather than on the day of the celebration. So say you're planning on doing a 42-hour fast over Friday - so from a Thursday night to Saturday at lunch - because you were going somewhere on Saturday for a holiday party. Well, maybe it's better just to do a really awesome 24. Break your fast at home on Friday night and sort of get your digestive system settled so you're not ruining your holiday party.

[00:28:03] And this just goes to the message that shorter fasts, when done consistently, are still going to generate results. So this year, if that's what it takes to get you through the holiday season, that's going to be a lot better than trying to do some of these longer fasts. Never, you know, being able to succeed because you have these issues. You're afraid to break your fast on Saturday because of the holiday party. So it ends up sort of just being a sloppy set of circumstances where you don't end up doing any fasting. So shorter fasts, generally, are your friend at this time of the year, and shorter fasts are going to have less side effects to our digestive tract.

[00:28:44] Now what can you do about it? Having some chia seeds, or having some psyllium husks, about half an hour to an hour before you break your fast. So you would just take a glass of water (just 16 ounces) add in one or two tablespoons - generally try to start with one, and if that doesn't work, then go up to two - and you would add in one or two tablespoons of the chia seeds or the psyllium husks. Stir it into the water. Let it sit for 15 to 30 minutes. The substances, they're going to gel up in the water, and so it's a different texture to drink, but it's still quite palatable. So you would consume that and then wait about 30 to 60 minutes and then break your fast. And that's often really, really helpful.

[00:29:28] Sometimes people struggle after the holiday season because their diet was so different and perhaps a little bit sugar fueled, and they're struggling with gastric distress in the New Year. So really try to be consistent with your diet. But this is a time where some probiotics might help, in addition to that fiber. So taking a good quality probiotic on a consistent basis can help rebalance your gut microbiome. Some people have found having

a real full-fat yogurt and, if you're not a big fan of dairy, goat milk, sheep, water buffalo, they're all, they tend to cause less inflammation than cow dairy amongst many individuals. Or there's even like coconut kefir that you can have, that's a dairy alternative. So some people will break their fast with that, just to get in some live cultures, and then they'll add in some chia seeds to the yogurt or the kefir to give it a little bit more fiber. And that seems to help balance people's gut microbiomes.

[00:30:34] Every now and then, the holiday season kind of triggers a bit of an inflammatory autoimmune response. So individuals with Hashimoto's thyroiditis, then they tend to have a mild flare-up. Generally, people who have a flare-up, they can have issues (with diarrhea) breaking their fasts because it can cause a flare-up can cause the digestive tract to be overactive or underactive and flip flop back and forth. So sometimes during a flare-up, we see that there's this overactive digestive tract and there's a lot of loose stools around fasting. So it would be better to do less fasting, focus on food quality, focus on getting the thyroid out of that flare-up and back into sort of your maintenance plan. And then certain integrative or functional doctors, naturopath doctors, you know, they'll work on certain supplements, like selenium, that might be able to help out with that too. So those are, a lot of talk about what to do about poop!

Nadia [00:31:33] That's a lot of stuff. It's hard to add to that. I think that this is very common; I would say half the people in our community have experienced this, at least. You've got the one half that complains of constipation, the other half the complaints about diarrhea, whenever they change their diet. And I definitely experienced loose stools for sure when I started fasting, like you said, at the beginning. And then it seems to fix itself. But I used chia seeds, like you mentioned, I used to break my fast a half-hour before my meal with chia seeds in water.

[00:32:02] One thing that I learned, because a lot of people in our community, most of us take some form of magnesium supplement, is if you're somebody who's prone to loose stools, be very careful which magnesium you're taking. Make sure you stay away from magnesium citrate, which can, of course, make this a whole lot worse. So that's the one thing I usually check in with my clients when they complain of loose stools when breaking a fast, is making sure that they're taking a different form of magnesium that's not magnesium citrate because that will often cause loose stools in some.

[00:32:34] The other thing that I think you mentioned, but I noticed, is that if you've had a meal that's very high in carb, you have a high insulin response, so you retain a lot, so you feel constipated. And then when you fast, that drop in insulin ends up causing that release so you might get loose stools from that reaction as well. So just keep an eye out. Again, break a fast at home, if this is, as Megan said, but I can't think of anything else to add.

Megan [00:33:01] Yeah, the more consistent with your diet, the less likely this is going to be a problem in the holiday season. But with dietary inconsistencies, there's a whole handful of reasons why this might be a problem. So for our habitual fasters out there, you're not suddenly broken. It's probably just due to a change in diet, and it will iron itself out in the New Year. And hopefully, some of these strategies you shared will help you just mitigate the, hopefully, what is a minor disturbance this holiday season.

Nadia [00:33:34] You know, Megan, as a younger person, I think I mentioned this before, I struggled with IBS a lot. And I think my IBS had a lot to do with this; it was the insulin going up and then going down. And so I had the constipation, the diarrhea, all the time. And the

inflammation, right? All of that. I think it was just insulin resistance in the making. Because now, all of a sudden, my IBS seems to be gone. So a lot of this is related to what we're talking about today.

Megan [00:34:00] All right, Nadia. This one, oof! This last question. It always seems that the heavy ones are for the end. Does fasting cause binge eating?

[00:34:10] And I know that so many people out there are terrified to fast during the holidays because there's so many baked goods and sugar around, that if they try to fast, they're just going to binge eat on treats. So what is your experience with this?

Nadia [00:34:26] I'm happy to answer this question because I think it's a very common question. I think, I myself have experienced something similar and thought that fasting caused bingeing. I mean, there are people who obviously have bingeing concerns, and I'm glad that Terri addressed this in her master class, for sure. And she talked a little bit about sort of differentiating between food addictions, and just abusing food, and binge eating, and all of these, and made it actually more clear for me. But I'll tell you what my experience has been with my clients.

[00:34:59] I don't think that fasting causes bingeing but I think that being very cautious about how you break your fast is important because how you break your fast might create a binge-like tendency. So if you've been fasting, so if when you're fasting, you feel great, you feel all this energy, you're not hungry. And when you are hungry and you think of food, at least in my experience, especially when you've done some longer fasts, you only desire real food. You start to think of steak and vegetables and salad. This is what I tend to crave, quote-unquote, it's not really a craving, but it's a desire for these real foods - really, really good foods. The problem is that a lot of us sometimes get into this guilt-reward sort of cycle. And so, you know, we feel guilty about what we've eaten and then we fast, and then we fast and we want to reward ourselves with certain treats, especially around this time in the holiday season, as you said, Megan. And then you go and you break your fast, not in the best of ways.

[00:35:59] So if you break your fast with more processed things, you know, higher sugar foods, you're going to have a huge insulin spike or a surge and then that's going to put you in this binge-like state so there's nothing wrong with you. You don't have a binge eating disorder, or fasting is not causing bingeing. But that huge insulin spike or insulin surge is going to put you in this storage mode, and then you just cannot stop eating and you keep eating and eating and eating. It's actually the insulin spike and surge, from the foods that you've chosen to eat, that is causing that, and you may not be aware of that. And because you've just finished fasting, you think it's the fast that's causing it, but it's how you've chosen to break a fast.

[00:36:43] If you break a fast with real foods. And we've talked a little bit about this and we've talked a little bit about how to celebrate the holidays and how to choose how you break a fast, how you start with meat and vegetables first, then that's very unlikely to happen. What do you think, Megan?

Megan [00:37:00] Yeah, absolutely. One thing I want to share here is something that one of our Community mentors - Mark Tom - said to me at the start of COVID. It wasn't just to me, it was through a group; we were at a Community meeting. Everyone was doing the support check-in because we were all in lockdown. And Mark's someone with a sweet

tooth. Sorry, Mark! Mark has a sweet tooth and he said something that really helped him during this initial lockdown was that he had to change his mindset around fasting and eating.

[00:37:34] When he thought of the word 'fasting' he felt deprivation, missing out. And then when he ended his fast and thought of eating, eating to him always meant celebration, comfort, indulging. So he went from having this mindset about sacrifice, deprivation to then thinking of eating just how he historically thought about it as a reward, or a comfort. And he's like, "You can't do that," because when he's fasting, he's healing. His insulin's going down. His glucose is going down. His inflammation is going down. His fat cells are emptying of gunk. You know, all of these great things are happening - his blood pressure is going down - all of these awesome things are happening when he's fasting, so he's healing. So he stopped calling his fasting days, 'fasting days', and he started calling them 'healing days'.

[00:38:25] And then he said, "OK, [he's] got to stop calling his eating days, 'eating days'," because that just comes with a whole pile of baggage. So he said, 'rebuilding' - I've healed and now I've rebuilt. So he said when he's having a, quote-unquote, 'healing day' he's thinking of all of the great things: the reversal of insulin resistance, diabetes, weight loss, autophagy, like, deep cellular recycling for anti-aging and disease prevention. He focuses on that. And on his eating days, then he focuses on rebuilding. So he's now done all of this housekeeping in his body, and now he's building it strong. Get out the old, build in the new. And you don't, he's like, "I don't want to be doing all that cleaning up, just to be adding more garbage in; it's counterproductive."

[00:39:12] So changing the name from 'fasting and eating' to 'healing and rebuilding' really helped his mindset. And I thought that was so powerful. And I think it really resonated across our entire Community during lockdown. It's something that people still talk about today, 18 months later. It still comes up in conversations every week in our Community and our coaching calls. So that's really important, too, just to think about your mindset.

[00:39:40] And then, in general, Christmas, New Year's, Valentine's Day, bad days at work, good days at work, all of the reasons where we would have gone to food to help us comfort ourselves, to help us celebrate, we need to find other strategies. So this holiday season, what are some things that you have, or hobbies that you have, or activities you can do, that you find to be very indulging and rewarding, satisfying. Or things you can do with other people in your household? So something that I like to do personally is have nice Epsom salt baths. So this holiday season, I went to a store that I like - The Detox Market - and they had these like holiday types of bath salts. So they had like peppermint, like different types of essential oils added to them that were themed for this particular holiday season. So I splurged on those so I get to have my nice holiday bath, something to look forward to. So when I've had that either really long day at work, or that really rewarding day at work, I can really sort of celebrate, you know, having this bath, put my diffuser in the bathroom, make it a really nice, special event.

[00:40:58] And then something with my husband too, that we do. We've gotten into sort of the Lego as a bit of a tradition. So I bought a Lego kit, like a gingerbread house, and the Home Alone house, and that's just something fun for us to do, and I actually find it to be huge for stress reduction; it's kind of like meditation, almost and you can go and just build the wall or something! And it's rewarding.

[00:41:26] Or something we did back in Toronto, when I was with my family, we would have a holiday game night. So instead of coming together and baking as a family, games and puzzles. So there's these different types of activities that you can do that you can comfort yourself with, or celebrate with, or seek that community enjoyment. And these things are not going to be obvious to you in the moment, when you're hungry, when you're upset, when you've already decided you're going to celebrate something, your habit is to go for food. So in advance, when you are feeling good, you've got to put pen to paper. You've got to start thinking about what you can do that's going to give you this joy by yourself and with the other people who you would commonly, you know, sort of seek out food with, but how can you seek out other activities with them? And that's one way to really enjoy the holiday season.

[00:42:26] For a while, I didn't like it because we weren't. I was sticking it out at baking time with my family. I didn't know what to do with my husband around the holidays. I felt like I couldn't nurture myself in any way during the holiday stress, so I just stopped liking them. But then I said, "OK, there's tons of things that I can do that don't revolve around food." And once you start getting into some of these other activities, they become habits and you really start to enjoy the holiday season and feel like you're taking complete part in all of the festivities, even though eating is not the central focus.

Nadia [00:43:01] Yeah, I agree. I often say this to our community - distraction is the best fasting aid. Every time people ask me about fasting aids - distraction. And then what you said, you guys do Lego and whatnot, I like knitting, crochet, painting; there's so many things that you can do. I do some of these things with my kids. And some of these things that you can do that, exactly like you said, they're actually well-documented, cortisol-lowering techniques. So it really helps with those stress levels. You know, it's so much more comforting, even though we don't realize it, because we, like Terri says, right? We've been, our mindset has been, that food is comfort, but there's so many other things that are so much more comforting. But we have to actually do them to realize, right? We're just used to going for that food.

[00:43:48] I love Terri's recommendation to just put your hand on the corner of a table, just before, if you're mindlessly going for food, just pausing and thinking about it, like, "Do I really need that, whatever it is?" And really the knitting and the crochet, or the Lego, or whatever it is that you could be doing, it would be so much more comforting and so much more, you know, lower your stress levels, and distracting and fun, there's so much more fun.

[00:44:13] But I do want to remind you guys that because we very often do blame fasting for this feeling of bingeing, especially if we fasted a little longer or if we're new to fasting. How you break your fast is going to ultimately determine how you eat, and how you feel like eating, and what you feel like eating, for the rest of the week really, for the next few days, not just for that moment. So, you know, be mindful of how you break your fast.

[00:44:40] When you're fasting, if you're in hunting mode, you're, as I said, craving all the right foods. So, you know, prepare accordingly and break your fast. You will love eating real foods after a fast. All those foods will taste so much better after a fast. So prepare and eat well because, even if you are at a holiday party and you end up choosing to eat a treat or something at the end, if you break your fast appropriately, your reaction to foods afterwards will be so much more positive, and you'll have much less of this bingeing sort of sensation.

Megan [00:45:14] Thanks, Nadia, and thank you to everybody who joined us for today's episode. If you have questions that you'd love for Nadia or myself to tackle during one of these episodes, please email them to podcast@thefastingmethod.com. Again, that's podcast@thefastingmethod.com.

[00:45:34] And to learn more about The Fasting Method and all of the work Nadia, myself, and our entire team at TFM is up to, you can head over to thefastingmethod.com.

[00:45:45] All right, everyone. That's a wrap for today's episode. Happy fasting, my friends, and we'll see you again next week.

Nadia [00:45:52] Bye, guys.