

# Breaking the Fast

**By Dr. Herbert S. Shelton**  
from **Fasting Can Save Your Life**

It is possible to break a fast with any food available. Either whole fruits or whole vegetables may be used. In order not to overconsume food, we have found it advisable to weigh the food for the first few days.

Dr. Virginia Vetrano, who has been my able associate for a number of years, has been breaking fasts on whole foods for several years and finds that in most cases it is far superior to breaking the fast on juices, as was formerly advised. She reasoned that animals in the wild have no juicers or blenders and therefore have to break their fasts naturally on whole foods. Why should man be an exception?

Using her knowledge of physiology, she further reasoned that the bulk in the food is necessary to promote both peristalsis and mixing contractions in the stomach and intestines. Bulk is also necessary to promote secretion of the digestive juices of the stomach and intestines. The bulk of the food touching the stomach and intestinal walls is the *stimulus* for muscular contraction as well as for proper digestive secretions. Because of this, solid food is digested and handled more efficiently than juices. It is held in the stomach and intestines long enough for proper digestion and absorption, whereas juices, lacking this bulk, are hurried along the digestive tract. Lacking in bulk, juices do not occasion strong peristaltic waves and do not elicit the gastrocolic reflex as strongly as solid foods. Because of these facts, when the fast is broken on juices the first bowel movement after a fast is delayed. When solid foods are used to break the fast, bowel movements are re-established much earlier.

## **The Importance of Chewing**

Chewing of food is necessary both psychologically and physiologically. Another advantage of breaking the fast with solid is that the faster does not become bloated and over-filled with fluids. Taking the bulk with the food prevents overeating and the post faster is more satisfied with his meals. When fruit or vegetable juicers are used, there is a loss of vitamins and nutrients by oxidation no matter how carefully nor how quickly the juice is prepared. Some fasters are afraid to drink the juice rapidly and one sip every fifteen minutes. By the time they have taken four ounces of juice in this manner, almost two hours have passed with the juice oxidizing all the while. Breaking the fast with four ounces of whole orange, a section at a time may be eaten with a minimum of oxidation.

The fast may be broken at any time of the day or night that hunger recurs. If broken in advance of the return of hunger, it may be broken arbitrarily at 8:00 a.m. A number of techniques for breaking the fast have been worked out. Indeed, almost every man who conducts fasts has his own favorite plan. The main need is wholesome food; but not too much of it.

Dr. Crane... used to give a faster an orange to eat in breaking the fast. The well-known Henry Lindlahr, MD, now deceased, formerly of Chicago and Elmhurst, Illinois, who was director of the College of Natural Therapeutics in Chicago, broke fasts with a handful of popcorn. His reason for this was that the corn served as a broom to sweep out the digestive tract. In any case, the popcorn did no harm.

### **Shelton's Method for Breaking a Fast**

The care exercised in breaking a fast is commonly proportioned to the length of a fast. Let me describe the plan we now employ. Assume that the fast has extended beyond fourteen days. We start the faster with four ounces of whole oranges (weighed without the peeling) every two hours during the first day feeding is resumed. We prefer to start feedings at eight o'clock in the morning and stop at six in the evening -- obviously this can be done only when the fast is broken in advance of the return of hunger. When hunger returns, the fast should be broken without regarding to the time. No harm is done, however, if the faster waits until 8:00 a.m. should hunger recur at midnight or in the wee hours of the morning.

On the second day, we give the faster eight ounces of orange or any fresh fruit in season (weighed without rind or peeling) every two hours. A different food may be used for each feeding. If a faster has no desire for a feeding, he is advised to skip a feeding or two. But this rarely occurs as it does when the fast is broken on juices. There is no compulsory amount of food he must take during this period.

On the third day we give twelve ounces of whole orange or melon for breakfast, two or three oranges, or two or three tomatoes, depending on their size for lunch, and three or four oranges for the evening meal. After the third day, it is no longer necessary to weigh the food as the body again becomes accustomed to handling food. Instead of oranges, the third day, an equivalent amount of grapefruit or other juicy fruit in season may be given. The particular food given is not so important as avoiding overfeeding the faster. These fruits should be fresh, well ripened and well chewed. Any tendency of the feeder to hurried eating should be discouraged.

On the fourth day, the faster gets a small breakfast composed of citrus fruits or one or two other fresh fruits or melon in season; at noon, a vegetable salad without salt, oil, vinegar, lemon juice or dressing of any kind, and one cooked nonstarch vegetable. For the evening meal, I feed fruit again. This meal should be light, but may be slightly larger than the breakfast.

On the fifth day, another fruit breakfast; a salad, two cooked green vegetables and a baked potato or a protein (small quantity) at noon, and fruit meal again in the evening. I permit a glass of sour milk (made from unpasteurized milk) at this fruit meal for those who are not vegetarians.

On the sixth day, the feeding is about the same as on the fifth day, except that the amounts are increased. By the end of the first week, the faster should be able to take

normal amounts of food. No between meal eating is permitted and no eating in the evening before retiring is allowed. Three meals a day, simple and composed of fresh foods, constitute the best plan of feeding following a fast. If, later, the individual desires to adopt a two-meal or a one-meal plan of eating, this is best done after he has acquired some weight.

### **Bed Rest is Important**

Bed rest should be continued through the first week or eating and activity begun very gradually. It is common for the faster to want to become active as soon as he resumes eating. This is unwise. He is not so strong and he does not have the endurance he thinks he has. Also, activity retards his gain in weight if he has fasted to add weight.

Some fasters want to take long walks as soon as eating is resumed. Such activity is often over indulged to the extent that it often retards recuperation and causes the individual's weight to stand still. One must take it easy for a few days before resuming normal activities.

If the fast has been less than two weeks in duration, breaking it maybe done with eight ounces of whole fruit every two hours the first day, then the preceding program followed from there. Less caution is required in breaking a short fast of this kind, and activity may e resumed sooner after a short fast.

All of this is true, of course, in those individuals who are in a fair state of health. If there is need for added rest and for light eating for some time after breaking a short fast, the faster must be guided by judgment of the adviser.

But the most important advice, for all fasters at the breakfast point is this: *Go Slowly!*