

Fast to lose weight

Most of us will get that one day when you feel you have eaten more than you should have. To get rid of this feeling, fast for a day.

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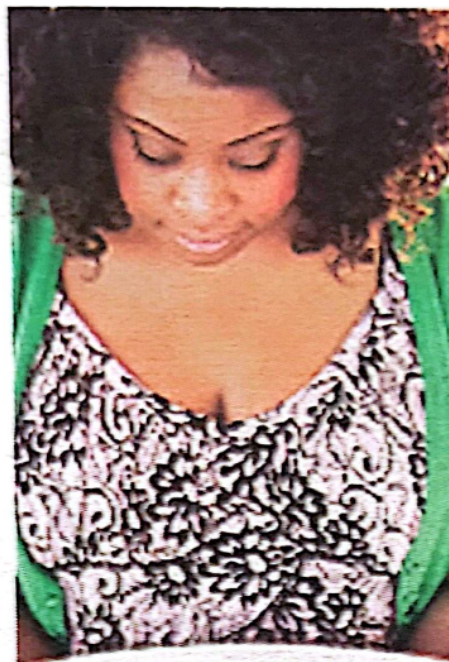
The lure for fasting among those looking to lose weight is very understandable. Where other diets come with cost, fasting is free, it saves time and can be done without major complications. Opinions from medical professionals are as divergent as they are numerous.

However, Dr Doreen Kagezi, a nutritionist, says: "When we eat, more food energy is ingested than can immediately be used. The unused and excess energy is eventually stored as body fat. When you go into a fast, the body is able to use this stored energy."

Because we are constantly eating, Dr Kagezi says our bodies will only use the incoming food energy and never burn the body fat that consequently manifests as added weight.

Clare Ndyababo usually fasts. She is quick to recommend it to everyone who compliments her on her petite figure. Ndyababo, 40, was a chubby child and teenager. When she joined A-Level in Bweranyangi Girls' Secondary School, she started feeling conscious about her big breasts, hips and bums.

"I started hiding under layers of



clothes until I was introduced to fasting. I cut out meals and started eating a handful of groundnuts and maize corn washing it down with sugarless cold coffee," she narrates.

The mother of two says she did not realise the results until she went home for holidays and everyone thought she had contracted a disease.

"I must have lost half of my body weight which I vowed never to put back," Ndyababo explains.

Although she does not resort to those drastic measures now, Ndyababo fasts twice a week and it has successfully helped her keep off the unwanted weight. Catherine Nanozi, a professional nutritionist, says there is a difference between fasting and starving oneself.

Fasting is the controlled and voluntary withholding of food while starving is the uncontrolled withholding of food for a long period of time. She strongly cautions against starving.

"When you overdo it (fasting) it ceases to be healthy forcing your body to adjust to starvation or ketosis mode where you burn fat as the primary source of fuel in order to spare muscle. You will lose weight in the form of body fat. Long term ketosis makes your blood more acidic, and can cause bad breath, fatigue, and other unpleasant symptoms and can potentially lead to kidney and liver damage," Nanozi cautions.

Benefits of fasting

According to two studies from Utah's Intermountain Medical Centre, fasting for a day once a month may prevent heart disease and insulin resistance, the precursor to diabetes.

Nanozi says fasting has the potential to help one lose weight only if it is done properly. "If you are fasting to lose weight you must be ready to make other changes to ensure the dropped weight stays off. The weight that is lost during a fast is usually water and stored carbohydrates, which will come back as soon as you start eating again," she says.

The best way to keep the weight off is by exercising, reducing food portions and eating regular healthy meals.

According to Dr Kagezi, fasting helps the body repair, detoxify and rejuvenate its cells. "When no food is consumed by the body, the body turns to the fat deposits for energy, which releases chemicals from the fatty reserves and results in the eradication of these chemicals through the organs," she explains.

FASTING THE RIGHT WAY

Nanozi recommends limiting food intake for a period about 8-12 hours. "You could choose to eliminate all foods or you could do fruits, juice and water," she explains.

Who should not fast?

people with a history of eating disorders, diabetes, low blood pressure, anemia, are pregnant or nursing, or are on prescription medication, as well as other conditions should consult their doctor before fasting.