

# WITNESS AGAINST TORTURE

a campaign to shut down Guantánamo

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## WAT Fasting: Frequently Asked Questions

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In this fast for the closure of Guantanamo, the release of the captives, and an end to torture, we have a common understanding and goal. It is the forefront of why we have chosen to deny ourselves food for 4 days, from January 8 through January 11, 2020. We will carry these goals and hopes with us each hour as our stomachs grumble, and our meal routines nag us.

But we remember those held at Guantanamo and in prisons throughout the world – those who have been deprived of food by their captors, and those who have voluntarily deprived themselves of food in protest. We stand in solidarity with them, and our fast is our small piece of understanding.

In addition to our political focus, fasting also has immense health benefits, and is practiced regularly by people across the world.

While our reason for fasting at this time is political, there are some practical things you should be aware of – especially if you have not fasted before, or not for this length of time.

1. What kind of fast should I be on? Traditionally the Witness Against Torture fast is liquid-only, with each person deciding which liquids and how much to drink, whenever they feel the need. We are very active during the week, often outside in very cold weather, so many people choose to maintain a calorie intake that provides enough energy to keep going. Fasting can range from giving up the enjoyment of eating meals (ie, drinking your daily caloric intake) to eliminating all nourishment (ie, only drinking water and tea). How you fast should be a personal decision based on your health and your objectives.

2. Will it be uncomfortable? For most people, the first 24-72 hours are the hardest. Headaches, lack of energy, and light-headedness are common. The beginning of a fast causes the body to expel built up toxins, resulting in the before-mentioned symptoms. While it may be hard, remember, it is good for your health. Many people begin to feel good after the first 2-3 days. If problems continue after several days, consult our medical adviser about whether or not to continue. For some individuals with health problems, some doctors do not recommend fasting more than 3 days without medical supervision.

3. What should I drink? Be careful about what you put into your body. Water, herb tea and 100% juices are ideal for a healthy, safe, and beneficial fast experience. And drink a variety of juices – don't just drink one kind. While you may crave other liquids (such as sodas and coffee)

it is advised to keep it pure. Be sure to drink some liquids that provide salts (also called electrolytes): miso broth and vegetable juice are good for this.

4. What shouldn't I drink? Stay away from juice cocktails (which contain corn syrups), V8 type juices (high in sodium), alcohol (you may already be loopy) and anything else containing artificial sweeteners or chemicals. Remember, when fasting, what you put into your body is flushing your system out. What do you want running through your body as you purify and detoxify?

5. How much should I be drinking? At a minimum, drink 64 ounces of liquid a day, or 8 8-ounce glasses/cups. It's important to try to achieve a balance of water and other liquids..

6. Speaking of the bathroom. If you are drinking an adequate amount of fluids, your urine should be mostly clear most of the time. If it is dark in color, drink more. Most people become constipated while fasting: try to address this before it's uncomfortable. Drinking enough liquid is important. Supplements that can help with constipation are flax or psyllium seed, senna tea (you'll find Smooth Move tea on the counter!), and of course the old standby prune juice.

7. Should I limit activity? Avoid strenuous activity and excessive exercise. You don't want to overtax yourself while not being able to replenish your carbohydrates and other energy supplying nutrients. Try walking slowly instead of running around. Use this time as an opportunity to be meditative about your reasons for fasting. Don't do any heavy lifting. Be aware of when you feel tired and weak, and take breaks as necessary.

8. How will I feel? When fasting, the body does not produce as much heat as normal. Dress warmly, especially while outside in stationary positions (such as our daily vigils). Wear plenty of layers, double up socks if necessary, and cover your head to trap escaping heat. Mood swings are common during fasting. Pay attention to your emotions, understand that you and those around you may get cranky, or more weepy than usual: Be gentle with yourself.

9. Other hygienic tips: When fasting, your body begins to detoxify and purge all sorts of chemicals from your system. Common signs that you are purging: a) your body odor becomes unpleasant. This is because toxins are leaving through your skin pores. It is advised that you bathe daily, scrubbing your skin with a washcloth to help remove the toxins. b) your mouth becomes pasty, especially in the morning. The mouth is another large excretion area for toxins. Brush your teeth and tongue to remove toxins each morning, and in the evening if desired.