

WITNESS AGAINST TORTURE

a campaign to shut down Guantánamo

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Fasting: Frequently Asked Questions

by Scott Langley

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 from January 3rd through January 11th, 2017. 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, Bagram in Afghanistan and similar 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. 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. 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.

2. What should I drink? Be careful about what you put into your body. Water 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 for the caffeine), it is advised to keep it pure. Stay away from juice cocktails (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?

3. How much should I be drinking? Some fasting experts recommend that you drink the equivalent of your body weight in fluid ounces. So if you weigh 150 pounds, you should aim for drinking 150 ounces of fluids. Of those 150 ounces, try to achieve a balance of water and 100% juices. This is just a suggestion. Don't feel you have to drink that much. A minimum of

64 ounces is great – anything more just helps keep hunger pains away... and keeps you closer to the bathroom. 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.

3. 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.

4. Will I feel cold? 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.

5. 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.