

FACTS ON FASTING

The average, healthy person is able to go without food for 30 hours without any ill effects. Exceptions are the following:

- children under the age of 12
- the elderly
- pregnant or nursing women
- people with other specific medical conditions (past or present) including diabetes, reactive hypoglycemia, other medical conditions that are associated with or could precipitate hypoglycemia; eating disorders (anorexia, bulimia).

If you have any health-related questions about the 30 Hour Famine or are regularly under a doctor's care for any of the above medical conditions, you are strongly advised to consult your family doctor before taking part.

What is fasting? Fasting is the act of abstaining from food. There are various types of ways to fast, but the most popular and the one that is part of the 30 Hour Famine is a *juice fast*.

Why is fasting part of the Souper Bowl? It's an opportunity for participants to focus their thoughts, prayers and efforts on things most important to God. It's a way to draw near to God. It also allows participants to feel what real hunger feels like -- a hunger that is felt by many of the boys, girls, men and women who are being helped by the funds raised during the 30 Hour Famine.

What does the Bible say about fasting? There are many scriptural references to fasting, in both the Old and New Testament. The following is not a complete list but is a good place to start.

Matthew 6:16-18
Daniel 9:3, 20
Judges 20:26-28

Matthew 9:16-17
Ezra 8:21-23
Psalms 35:13

Matthew 17:20-21
Isaiah 58
Mark 9:29

For further study, please consult a pastor, Bible scholar or Christian bookstore. Another excellent source of information about fasting is found in the April 5, 1999 edition of Christianity Today. Copies of their special report can be found on line at www.christianitytoday.com and searching on the word "fasting."

What are some alternatives to fasting? A 24 hour fast is not required for those participating in the St James Souper Bowl, but it is a recognized component of St James Souper Bowl. Again, most people can go without food for 24 hours with no ill effects, but it should be a personal choice. If, for any reason (medical or otherwise), someone cannot participate in a 24 hour fast, modifying the Famine is accepted. Some suggested ways to modify a fast include:

- skipping a meal (or two)
- abstaining from something (i.e. chocolate, soda pop, etc.) for a period of time
- fasting from talking for a period time
- fasting from media (no TV, movies, videos, radio, music, etc.) for a period of time.

How should we break the fast? Breaking your fast can be a meaningful time for the group, but it also should be done gradually and sensibly. A big pizza feed might sound like a great idea, but something a little easier to digest, like pasta or rice (lots of carbohydrates) might go down a little easier. (For more ideas on breaking the fast, check out your 30 Hour Famine Leader's/Activity Guide.)

This document was prepared by World Vision's 30 Hour Famine staff. It is not designed to replace a physician's guidance but is provided to answer common questions regarding fasting.