

# Ramadan Guide For Healthcare Practitioners



## WHAT IS RAMADAN & WHY DO MUSLIMS FAST

- Ramadan is the holiest month in the Islamic calendar, observed during the ninth month of the Islamic lunar calendar.
- Ramadan is a month of spiritual reflection and devotion for Muslims worldwide.
- Fasting during Ramadan is one of the Five Pillars of Islam and is considered a mandatory act of worship.
- Eating, drinking & sleeping habits change during this month.
- Fasting during Ramadan is a way for Muslims to cultivate a sense of inner peace and well-being, both physically and spiritually.
  - It's a mental and physical exercise that teaches self-restraint and self-discipline.



# WHO FASTS?

- **Healthy and able-bodied adults.**
- **Exemption:**
  - **Pregnant & lactating women, when traveling long distances, menstruating women, individuals with acute and chronic illnesses, young children who haven't reached puberty, the elderly, and those who are mentally ill.**
  - **Despite being exempt, many individuals with comorbidities decide to fast.**
- **Healthy individuals that miss fasts during Ramadan, such as lactating and menstruating women, will make up their fasts before the next Ramadan.**
- **The role of the HCP is to provide a patient-tailored approach that is individualized to the patient's specific needs.**
  - **Special care should be given to patients with T2DM on oral hypoglycemic agents, and adjustments must be made as indicated.**
- **Patients experiencing hypoglycemia are encouraged to break their fast.**

## HOW IS IT DONE?

- Duration
  - Fasting lasts 29-30 consecutive days (depending on the moon sighting)
- Each day fasting starts at the break of dawn and ends at sunset.
- The daily fasting time lasts 12-18+ hrs, depending on the geographical region of the world.
- During Ramadan, there is a shift from a diurnal to a nocturnal eating pattern.
  
- During fasting hours, Muslims refrain from food, drinks, gum, smoking, and any forms of nourishment, such as oral medication, vitamin supplementation, IV therapy, and TPN (individuals with acute or chronic illnesses are exempt from fasting).
- Medication timing will need to be adjusted for this period.



## RAMADAN MEALS - SUHOOR

- Meals are usually shared with family, friends, and as a community.
- HCPs should discuss medication management and administration before Ramadan starts due to daytime fasting hours.
- The first meal is Suhoor.
  - The pre-fast meal, also known as suhoor, is eaten before dawn and is intended to provide sustenance for the fasting day ahead.
  - Eating suhoor will help ensure the body has the necessary energy and nutrients to carry throughout the day.
  - Suhoor can resemble a breakfast and dinner meal.
  - Individuals may choose to skip this meal, but this is discouraged since it can lead to low blood sugar levels causing lethargy.
    - Recommend wholesome & nutrient-dense meals (protein/high fiber, complex carbs/grains/fruit & veggies/dairy).
    - Encourage proper hydration to prevent dehydration during the fast.



# RAMADAN MEALS - IFTAR

- This is the second meal.
  - The meal to "break the fast," which happens after sunset.
  - Resembles a dinner meal.
- Fasting is usually broken with a date and water.
  - Dates are a quick source of energy and are easily digestible.
    - High carbohydrate content (~60-70%) in the form of natural sugars (dextrose, fructose) is rapidly absorbed in the body.
    - This can aid in returning blood sugar levels to normal.
- Reduced meal frequency in Ramadan may still lead to weight gain due to calorie-dense meals.
  - Encourage wholesome and balanced meals.
  - Encourage high-fiber foods that contribute to a feeling of fullness.
- Prioritize hydrating with water and noncaffeinated beverages.
  - Include fluid-rich hydrating foods (watermelon, cucumber, lettuce, strawberries, yogurt, pears)



**PHYSICAL  
ACTIVITY  
IN  
RAMADAN**

- **Maintaining a physical activity regimen during Ramadan is recommended while allowing for modifications as needed.**
  - **A sedentary lifestyle is discouraged.**
- **A high-intensity exercise regimen should not be started in Ramadan due to long fasting hours.**
- **Encourage moderate activity**
  - **Walking, light jogging, cycling, at-home workout, light machine workouts**
- **Ideal time**
  - **Moderate activity**
    - **1-2 hrs pre-iftar to replenish afterward**
  - **Strenuous activity**
    - **1-2 hrs post iftar when the body is adequately nourished again**
- **Taraweeh prayer is performed a few hours after the iftar meal. The prayer consists of repeated kneeling, bowing, and rising cycles, which can count toward a light physical activity regimen.**



## EID-UL-FITR CELEBRATION

- **Eid-Ul-Fitr**
  - A 3-day holiday that marks the end of Ramadan.
- It starts with a communal morning prayer, usually performed at the mosque or community center.
- Eid Mubarak is the phrase used to wish someone a blessed Eid.
- Prayer is followed by a celebratory meal and sweets, usually enjoyed with family and friends.
- Family and friends exchange gifts.
- Muslims donate a portion of their wealth to the poor & needy.
- If medication adjustments were made during Ramadan, a plan for resuming a pre-Ramadan medication schedule should be in place.
  - Consult with your HCP.





# THANK YOU!

Thank you for taking the time to read this guide and increasing your cultural awareness around Ramadan. Your dedication to providing better care for Muslim patients is greatly appreciated.

If you found this guide helpful, please share it with your colleagues to help promote cultural competency and understanding of Ramadan in the healthcare field.

## QUESTIONS

If you have questions or need more guidance on this topic, please comment below.

