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Ramadan Special Issue!



What is Ramadan?

Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic lunar calendar and lasts either 29 or 30 days, depending on when the lunar cycle and the new crescent moon.

What is the significance of Ramadan?

Ramadan is a period of fasting and spiritual growth and is one of the five “pillars of Islam” – the others being the declaration of faith, daily prayer, alms- giving and the pilgrimage to Mecca. Able-bodied Muslims are expected to abstain from eating, drinking and sexual relations from dawn to sunset each day of the month. Many practicing Muslims also perform additional prayers, especially at night, and attempt to recite the entire Quran. The prevailing belief among Muslims is that it was in the final 10 nights of Ramadan that the Quran was first revealed to the Prophet Muhammad.

Special Activities:

Many mosques host daily community dinners where Muslims can break their fast together. Many mosques also host a community dinner on the weekends. Special Ramadan prayers called Taraweeh are held in most mosques after the night prayer. During Taraweeh, the prayer leader recites at least one thirtieth of the Qur’an so that by the end of the month the entire Qur’an will have been recited. Since Ramadan is a time for Muslims to be especially charitable and fasting helps Muslims feel compassion for the hungry and less fortunate, many mosques hold food drives or fundraisers for charity during Ramadan.

Many mosques also host open houses for their friends and neighbors of other faiths to join them for their fast-breaking dinner or iftar at the end of the fasting day. The Night of Power known as Lailat al-Qadr, is believed to fall on one of the odd nights during the last ten days of Ramadan, but is most widely observed on the 27th night of Ramadan. It is considered the most blessed night in Ramadan because it is believed to be the night in which the Qu’ran was first revealed.

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Managing diabetes during Ramadan



Are you living with diabetes and planning to fast for Ramadan? Follow these practical tips and advice so you can enjoy a safe and healthy Ramadan.

Fasting, refraining from using medications, insulin and drinking water will affect your blood glucose levels (BGL) and can lead to potential risks including high BGL (hyperglycaemia), low BGL (hypoglycaemia), dehydration, blood clots and diabetic ketoacidosis (DKA). According to religious tenets, fasting is not meant to create excessive hardship on an individual. It is a commendable spiritual practice but it's one that can come with health risks for people living with diabetes.

You may be advised not to fast if your diabetes management is unstable prior to Ramadan, if you have type 1 diabetes, if you are hypo unaware, pregnant, unwell, or will be performing intense physical labour. If you have complications associated with diabetes, such as heart disease, kidney disease or visual problems, the risk of these issues becoming worse during the fast is high, and so you should consider not fasting. If you have type 2 diabetes and are treated with metformin, thiazolidinediones or diet alone, and if your blood glucose is well managed, you are at low risk of complications with fasting. The decision to fast is personal, and your health care team has a duty of care to respect your commitment and ensure your safety.

Be prepared

A pre-Ramadan assessment is an opportunity to review your blood pressure, BGL and lipids, learn of any potential risks of fasting, discuss monitoring and how to treat hypoglycemia or manage high BGL, and prescribe any Ramadan-specific changes in the dose and/or timing of your medication or insulin regime. Remember a hypo is a medical emergency and treatment means you will need to break your fast. Visiting your doctor to adjust your insulin regime before you begin fasting can help you avoid this.

Safety tip: Never stop taking your insulin or your diabetes medications. Speak with your diabetes doctor or nurse about how to change the time and dose during Ramadan.



Check BGLs regularly



Checking your BGL more frequently is encouraged during Ramadan, particularly if you take insulin or are on any sulfonylureas. The Diabetes and Ramadan International Alliance confirm that pricking the skin for blood glucose testing does not invalidate the fast.

Safety tip: If you feel unwell at any time during Ramadan, check your BGL and be prepared to break the fast to treat a hypo (BGL less than 4mmol/L) - or manage hyperglycaemia (BGL more than 15mmol/L).

Eating during Ramadan

During the month of Ramadan your eating pattern will be affected by long gaps between meals and feasting after iftar that can lead to greater swings in blood glucose levels. Good nutrition is particularly important at this time and maintaining a healthy eating plan will help you avoid the overeating of carbohydrates and fatty foods at the sunset meal.

Suggested meal plan

- Let your predawn meal (suhour) be the largest one
- Include complex carbohydrates such as multigrain/wholegrain, sourdough breads, porridge, oats, bran, barley, semolina and buckwheat to give you sustainable energy throughout the day
- Include protein rich foods such as lean meat, poultry, fish, eggs, dairy products, seeds, nuts, beans, legumes and tofu.
- Drink plenty of fluids, and choose fluid-rich foods to make sure you are well hydrated for the day.

When breaking your fast (iftar):

- Break your fast with a 'sunset snack' of two dates, a cup of water and a bowl of soup.
- Three dates are equal to one exchange (15g of carbohydrates). This will provide an instant boost of energy and hydration to help settle your hunger and prevent overeating at the start of your main meal.
- Eat slowly and chew food well.
- Use the healthy plate model as a reminder: a quarter of your plate should be complex low GI carbohydrates such as low GI rice, legumes and sweet potato, a further quarter of your plate should be lean meat, skinless chicken, egg, fish or tofu; the final half of your plate should be vegetables or salad.
- Make sure you drink plenty of fluids - try to drink two cups every hour to remain hydrated.

