

The Month of Ramadan



What is Ramadan?

Ramadan is the 9th month of the Islamic Calendar when Muslims all across the world fast for the month. The Islamic calendar is based on the lunar calendar. Sighting of the new moon signals the start of the month. This year Ramadan will start on April 13th. When fasting, Muslims cannot eat food, drink water/beverages or have sexual relations from dawn until sunset each day. At sunset, they break their fast. This meal is called “iftar”. To maintain adequate hydration and nutrition throughout the day, Muslims can eat a pre-dawn meal, “sahoor”.

In addition to fasting, the month of Ramadan is a time for Muslims to increase their connection to God by doing extra prayers, reading the Qur’an (the holy book that was revealed to Prophet Mohammed), giving charity for those in need and empathizing with those who do not have enough food to eat. This is also a time to practice self-control and self-reflection.

Taraweeh is a voluntary night prayer that occurs in the month of Ramadan. A section from the Qur’an is read each night during the taraweeh prayer. The Qur’an was first revealed during this month.



Who does **not** have to fast?

It is part of every adult Muslim’s duty to fast the 29-30 days of Ramadan. However, in certain situations there are exemptions to fasting. This includes those who are: sick (acute illnesses and certain chronic diseases), travelling, menstruating, pregnant or breastfeeding (if concerned it may harm the baby), have intellectual disability, and the elderly. Once the person is able to fast, they should make up their missed days. Otherwise, they should feed a person in need for every day they were unable to fast.

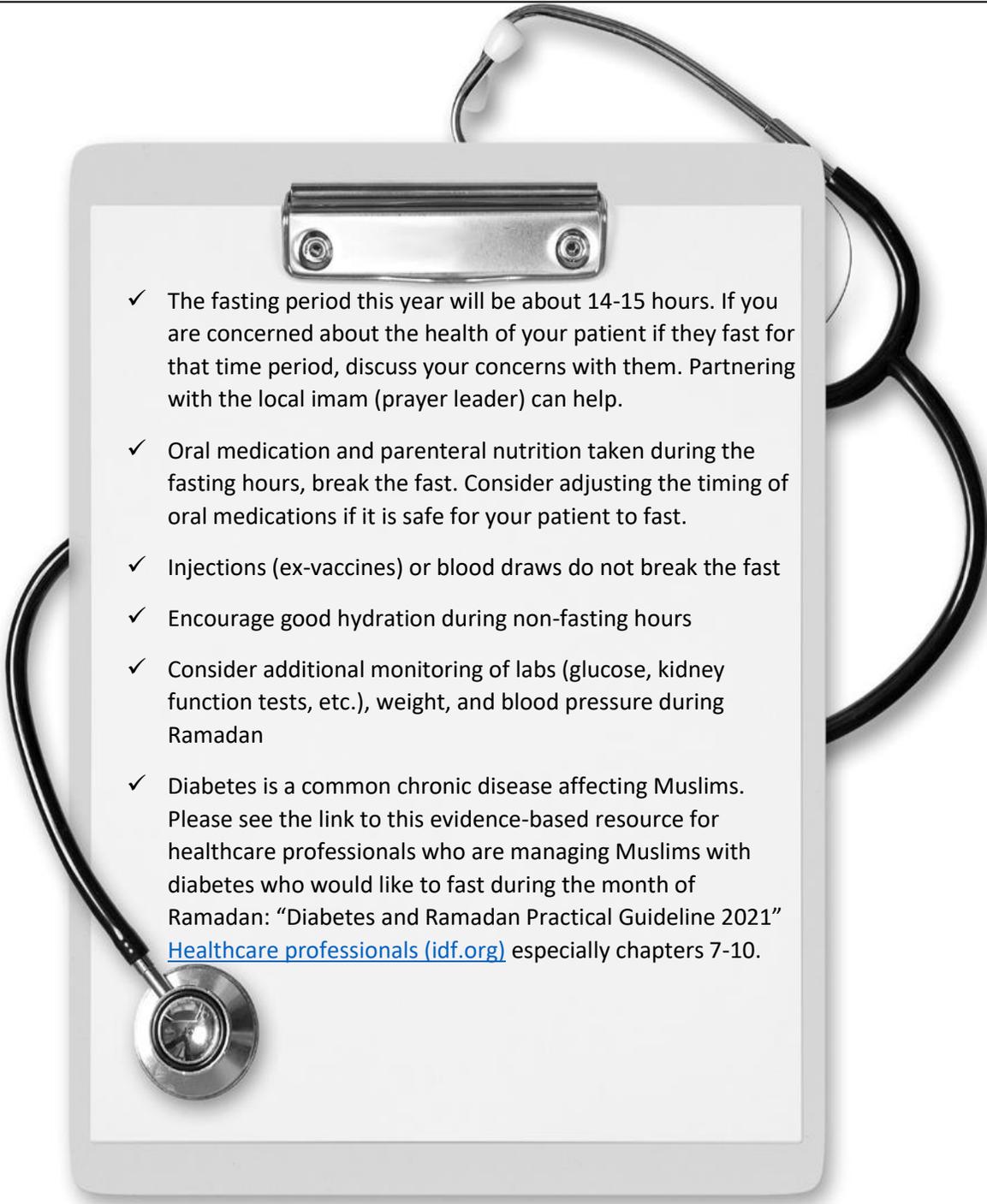
Muslims typically break their fast on dates and water. Special foods are often eaten during Ramadan and vary depending on where the person lives.

Eid al-Fitr

Eid al-Fitr, “the festival of breaking of the fast”, celebrates the completion of Ramadan and will be on May 13th. On this day there is a special prayer and sermon. Family and friends dress up, visit each other, eat delicious food and give gifts to the children.

Tips for Healthcare Providers during Ramadan

Fasting is very important to Muslims. Your patients may look to you for some guidance on how to manage their illnesses, especially chronic illness so that they can fast. Preservation of life is an important principle in Islam, so if fasting may cause the person harm, they are exempt.

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- ✓ The fasting period this year will be about 14-15 hours. If you are concerned about the health of your patient if they fast for that time period, discuss your concerns with them. Partnering with the local imam (prayer leader) can help.
 - ✓ Oral medication and parenteral nutrition taken during the fasting hours, break the fast. Consider adjusting the timing of oral medications if it is safe for your patient to fast.
 - ✓ Injections (ex-vaccines) or blood draws do not break the fast
 - ✓ Encourage good hydration during non-fasting hours
 - ✓ Consider additional monitoring of labs (glucose, kidney function tests, etc.), weight, and blood pressure during Ramadan
 - ✓ Diabetes is a common chronic disease affecting Muslims. Please see the link to this evidence-based resource for healthcare professionals who are managing Muslims with diabetes who would like to fast during the month of Ramadan: “Diabetes and Ramadan Practical Guideline 2021” [Healthcare professionals \(idf.org\)](https://www.idf.org/) especially chapters 7-10.

Sources:

The Holy Qur'an

Ramadan Information Fact Sheet. [Ramadan Information Sheet from Islamic Networks Group \(ING\)](#)

Ramadan. [Ramadan – Islamic Society of North America \(isna.net\)](#)

Caring for Muslim patients. www.icv.org.au

Healthcare providers handbook on Muslim patients. 2nd ed.

http://www.health.qld.gov.au/multicultural/health_workers/hbook-muslim.asp

Abolaban H, Al-Moujahed A. Muslim patients in Ramadan: A review for primary care physicians. *Avicenna J Med.* 2017;7(3):81-87. doi:10.4103/ajm.AJM_76_17